IN UNITY

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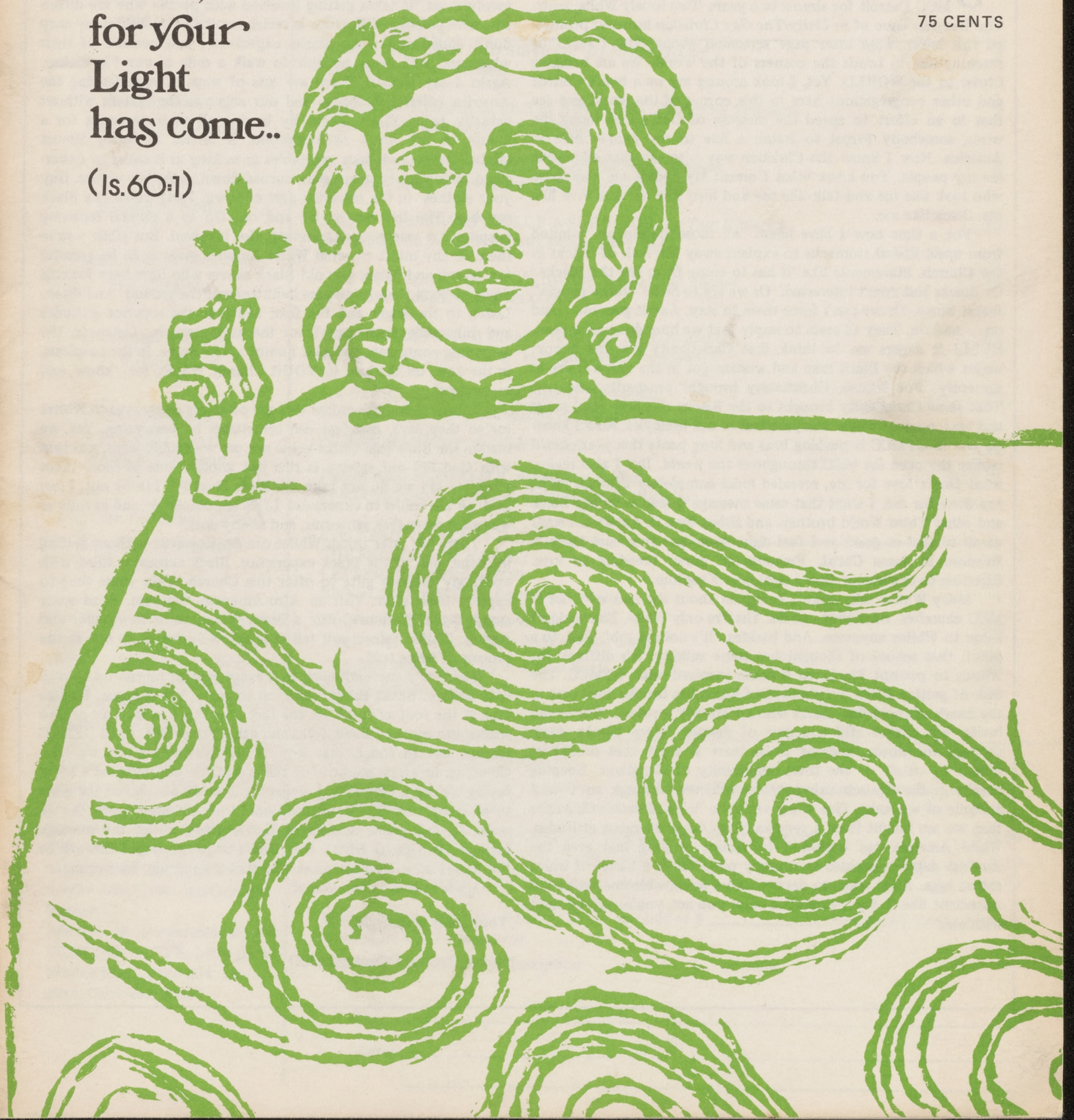
75 CENTS

Arise, shine; for your Light has come..

(Is.60:1)



Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Being a Black Gay Woman member of UFMCC is about as much fun as cruising a cemetery. I have been a member of MCC Detroit for almost two years. Two lonely White years. The Dec/Jan issue of *In Unity/The Gay Christian* however prompted this letter. Page after page screamed about how UFMCC is reaching out to touch the corners of the world. We are bringing Christ to the WORLD. Yet, I look around my own home Church and other congregations here in this corner of the world and see that in an effort to speed the message of God's love along the wires, somebody forgot to install a line to my people here in America. Now I know the Christian way is to say that all people are my people. You know what I mean! My people are also those who look like me and talk like me and hurt like me and love like me. Black like me.

For a time now I have heard all those statements vomited from upset liberal stomachs to explain away the lack of Blacks in the Church. Statements like 'it has to come from the the Blacks.' Or Blacks just aren't interested. Or we try to make "those people" feel at home. Or we can't force them to stay. And it goes on. . .and on. . .and on. They all seem to imply that we have done all we can. BULL! It angers me to think that Christianity was the banner under which the Black man and woman got in the shape we're in presently. For Whites, Christianity brought prosperity and joy. That same Christianity brought to the Blacks shackles, long pants and bras, none of which was practical to our lifestyles. Now I know no one in UFMCC is pushing bras and long pants this year. And I realize the need for MCC throughout the world. But I also realize what God's love for me, revealed most completely through MCC, has done for me. I want that same message shared with my Black and other Third World brothers and sisters here in America. I want us all to feel as good as I feel right now, knowing that there is freedom in Jesus Christ. Freedom to grow. Freedom to love. Freedom to experience God's right-now Kingdom.

Many Whites ask, when I complain about the lack of color in MCC churches, what they can do. They're only White. Blacks don't listen to Whites anymore. And besides, 'it's not my job'. Well, to a point, that school of thought has some validity. It's difficult for Whites to prompt Blacks to become involved with UFMCC. The task of getting Black people to the Church lies for the most part in the hands of those few Blacks who are already involved. Whites can invite, but there's still a degree of distrust. Once Blacks come through the doors, keeping them there is a job that should be shared by us all -- the total community of Christians. Keeping Blacks in the Church can only be achieved through an honest attitude of welcome. One thing yet to be learned in this Church is that we are taught from a very early age to smell racist attitudes. White America has wallowed in racism so long that even the smallest degree becomes as strongly poignant as a barrel of warm rotten eggs. All it takes to destroy those warm welcome smiles is a statement like 'I don't care what color you are, you're still all right with me.'

So what does it take to make 'those people' (US) trust the Church (US too)? It's my opinion that it takes a little Christ-like involvement. It takes getting involved with people who are different, whether that difference is racial or otherwise. Whites say they don't understand what Blacks experience, and because of their whiteness, will never be able to walk a mile in our Florsheims. Again I say BULL! There are lots of ways of experiencing the America offered to Blacks and our anger at the system without actually being Black. Begin by buying all your groceries for a month in the Black neighborhood. A month of eating almost tainted meats and limp vegetables is as long as it takes to understand why grocery stores were burned down in the late sixties. Buy your clothes in the minority part of town. Party down in a Black gay bar. The list can go on and on. Go to a general receiving hospital for emergency treatment. Get involved. But while you're there in the midst of what White America gives us to be grateful for, watch and listen. See old Black sisters who have been looking down so long their bodies are bent towards the ground. And listen. Listen to the anger and the fear. Listen to the superior attitudes and inhumane treatment from the shop owners. Listen to the degrading comments and sick humor in the stores, in the hospitals, in the bars, on the bus, in YOUR Church. Watch, feel, know, and understand.

I know doing things like that are probably dangerous to Whites (or so they say), and fear can sometimes be paralyzing. Yet, we read in the Bible that Christ is the armour we should wear, and that with God lies our safety. Is this just another one of those times when we say we do not take the Bible literally? I think not. I feel that we are called to experience LIFE as completely and as fully as we can - whenever, wherever, and at any cost.

There are safer things Whites can do, however, without getting into the mud of the Black experience. Black culture is filled with excitingly creative gifts to offer this Church. Take some time to explore these gifts. Visit an Afro-American museum. Read some angry Black literature. Buy a Black magazine or newspaper and read it. Think before you tell that colored joke. Stop one in the process of being told.

There is something each and every one of us can do to deal with racism. Small things combine to make big changes. Realize that at the root of it all lies the fact that there exists a lot of love within the souls of Black folks and other minorities. Until UFMCC reaches out to touch that love, it doesn't matter that we have Churches in every country of the world. We still support a lie in saying we are a Church for all people if we do not spread the news to all people of God's unconditional love and acceptance. As we work to tell other nations of God's presence, let the message include the GOOD NEWS that God's wagon train got through to the American wilderness, or at least that the journey has begun.

My love goes out to you all.

Your sister in struggle,

Renee McCoy, Exhorter MCCD

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FEATURES

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS: *By Renee McCoy* 2
An open letter on Racism

SPREADING THE GOSPEL VIA AIRWAVES *By Patrick Townson* 7
Turn a hobby into an effective witness

QUALITY IS WHAT COUNTS *By Dr. Norman Pittenger* 8
A world-renowned theologian looks at relationships

I QUIT – OBSERVATIONS OF A SURVIVOR *By Tere Roderick* 10
One minister's thoughts on why people leave MCC

GOD'S CHILDREN IN GOD'S HOUSE *By JoAnne Wagner* 12
A visitor's encounter with MCC-DC

MENTAL ILLNESS: A CRAZY IDEA *By Dr. L.A. Siebert* 15
A *frying pan* reprint asking "Is commitment the answer?"

MY STORY SO FAR . . . *By Sherrie Zimbelman* 22
A candid testimony on struggling for wholeness

PRISON MINISTRY *By Bob Arthur* 21

JESUS AND SEXUALITY *By Jeffrey Pulling* 27
Following Jesus' example in molding sexual attitudes

DEPARTMENTS

THE FELLOWSHIP FAMILY 4
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR 6
NEWS COMPOSITE *By Patrick Townson* 9
BOOK REVIEW *By Lawrence Gauer* 13
The Unhappy Gays, another homophobic work
THE BOTTOM LINE *By T. Earlye Scott* 17
LAY PAGE *By Jean Gralley* 19

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CINCINNATI, OHIO

MCC CINCINNATI CELEBRATES FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

MCC Cincinnati celebrated the fifth anniversary of its chartering in March. The weekend celebration included a Reader's Theatre presentation, pot luck dinner/dance, and Sunday worship, which saw a record 184 persons in attendance. Pastor Howard Gaass and the congregation of MCC Cincinnati shared the joyous weekend with the former pastors of the church: the Rev. B. J. McDaniel, J. E. Thomas, and the Rev. Bonnie Daniel. Five new Deacons were also set aside at the anniversary service. †

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

MCC SAN JOSE PASTOR ARRESTED

The Rev. Sky Anderson was installed as Pastor of MCC San Jose on April 1, 1979 in a very moving service officiated by the Rev. Carol Cureton. Although the installation service marked the official beginning of the Rev. Anderson's pastorate in San Jose, Sky had already made his presence known in the community through one of his many attempts to raise the public consciousness.

In March, Pastor Anderson participated in a march with an organization called the Pacific Life Community, which is a transnational action-oriented group of "concerned people who are developing non-violent methods of social change, and are working to dispel the myth that weapons provide security and jobs."

The group marched against Lockheed Corporation, which is working to produce Trident submarine-launched missiles and to construct a Trident submarine base on Puget Sound. (Allegedly, one Trident submarine will be capable of destroying 408 cities or other targets with a nuclear blast about five times that which ripped into Hiroshima.)

The Rev. Anderson helped carry a replica of the submarine in the march, joined with 28 persons to commit civil disobedience by crossing the "blue line" onto Lockheed property, and was promptly arrested with the others.

The evening prior to the march, the Rev. Anderson joined with people from the Catholic workers, Society of Friends, Baptist clergy, and others for worship and training sessions in non-violent action. After the arrests, approximately 125 people gathered across the street from the jail, keeping vigil, singing gospel music and liberation songs.

Of the 28 arrested, many pleaded "no contest" and received two-day jail sentences. The others, including Sky, pleaded "Not Guilty" to secure jury trials, which were scheduled for May 2.

At the hearing on May 2, the judge granted a change of venue, and the proceedings were rescheduled for May 10 in Palo Alto, CA. The Rev. Anderson indicated that the change of venue was granted because the judge was, in essence, tired of dealing with the cases resulting from the march, and that the case was moved in order to insure the objectivity of the court. *In Unity* will report the outcome of this case in the next issue. †

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

In March, the Rev. Sandy Taylor and the Rev. Anne Keast (Co-Pastors) conducted a workshop on Alternative Lifestyles during Women's Week at Hanover College, located in Hanover, Indiana.

Approximately fifty persons gathered to hear the Pastors share their life experiences as ministers and as a couple.

The presentation marked the first time homosexuality had been an open topic of discussion at the very conservative school, and the Co-Pastors are optimistic that they will be invited back in the future to conduct similar workshops. †

WASHINGTON FIELD OFFICE

DEBAUGH AUTHORS CHAPTER OF BOOK *POSITIVELY GAY*

R. Adam DeBaugh, UFMCC Social Action Director, is a contributor to a newly published book, *Positively Gay*, which was edited by Betty Berzon, Ph.D, and Robert Leighton.

Positively Gay presents a series of essays providing new options and information, "ideas and guidance for gays from gays who are recognized as experts in their fields," according to the publisher. The book urges gays to consult themselves rather than the prevailing heterosexual culture. DeBaugh's contribution is a chapter entitled "Using Your Gay Voting Power."

The book was released on April 23, 1979, by Celestial Arts publishing (231 Adrian Road, Millbrae, CA 94030) and sells for $4.95 in paperback. †

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

MCC BALTIMORE HONORED WITH MAYORAL PROCLAMATION

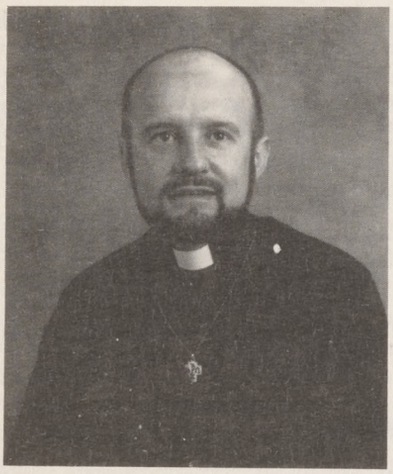
March 25, 1979 marked the anniversary of Pastor Stan Harris' arrival from Adelaide, South Australia, and he celebrated it in style. On that day, Pastor Harris was presented with a proclamation signed by Mayor William Schaeffer declaring that date "Rev. Stan Harris and Metropolitan Community Church Day" in Baltimore.

In his congratulatory remarks at the presentation, Mr. Edwin Dean, representing the Mayor, indicated that the efforts of MCC Baltimore deserved recognition not only for MCC's "unique ministry", but for work on behalf of the entire community, particularly in the areas of juvenile services and social services to the needy.

Pastor Harris indicated that the proclamation paid tribute to the spirit of

MCC as a church for all people, and accepted it as an encouragement of greater outreach.

"Our Church has worked together and so all credit must be divided equally," the Rev. Harris stated. †



Rev. Stan Harris

PHILADELPHIA, PA

PASTOR BORBE RAISING CITY'S CONSCIOUSNESS

MCC Philadelphia Pastor Don Borbe is one of three persons appointed to represent the gay community on the Fellowship Commission, an influential Philadelphia organization which monitors discrimination on a non-partisan basis among political parties and leaders.

The group, which represents all religious and ethnic groups of the city, had never before truly addressed itself to the inclusion of sexual minorities.

At a Commission meeting earlier this year, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese addressed the discrimination they were experiencing. The Rev. Borbe confronted the RCA with the fact that no organization has been more oppressive to gay people, and that he had been informed by a City Councilman's aide that the Archdiocese was the primary obstacle to the passage of a gay rights amendment in that city. Pastor Borbe further indicated that any group which so discriminated, especially those in positions of power, was hypocritical in any attempt to represent themselves as an oppressed minority.

The Rev. Borbe's challenge earned a great deal of support for gay concerns, even though there was little debate -- the speaker from the RCA merely blushed and stated he was not qualified to speak on the RCA's position regarding sexual minorities.

At a more recent meeting, Pastor Borbe challenged the Board of Commissioners' presentation of the "priority of concerns for 1979", which failed to include sexual minorities. When a "Fair Election Campaign Practices Code for 1979" was presented, he again challenged them to include gay concerns. A debate ensued this time, with the Board defending its position, while three non-gay attorneys spoke in behalf of the gay community.

At the close of debate, a vote was taken, and the organization, founded in the early 1900's, officially went on record, for the first time, in support of prohibiting discrimination against sexual minorities. The additional significance of this step is that every politician will be made aware of gay concerns, and will be monitored by a very respected, powerful group. †

SAMARITAN THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OFFERS COURSES PRIOR TO CONFERENCE

Two intensive one-week courses, "Prison Ministry" and "Sexuality-Related Counseling", will be offered by STI August 6-10, the week prior to General Conference. "Prison Ministry" will be taught by the Rev. Bob Arthur and the Rev. Tere Ann Roderick. "Sexuality-Related Counseling" will feature five different resource persons (both clergy and secular counselors). Both courses will run Monday through Friday: "Prison Ministry" during the day (9 AM -- 1 PM), and "Sexuality-Related Counseling" in the evening (6 PM -- 10 PM). Anyone may audit these courses for $10 per course. Officially enrolled students of STI (resident or extension) may receive two credits for each course at $20 tuition per course. By offering these intensive courses the week before General Conference, STI hopes to make them available to persons who plan to come to Los Angeles for the Tenth Anniversary Conference.

The Rev. Jeffrey Pulling, Dean of STI, has announced that the Rev. Gary Wilson (Pastor, MCC Anchorage, AK) has donated some items of Ethiopian Coptic Orthodox origin to STI. Included are some wooden prayer beads, a carved wooden sculpture of a priest, and a hand-bound set of Scriptures. The Scriptures are hand-printed on real parchment in Ge'ez, the ancient Biblical language of Ethiopia. The Rev. Wilson acquired these items while serving in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia in 1963. He has presented them to STI so that they may be preserved and displayed for the Fellowship. The STI Trustees gratefully acknowledge the gifts, and are looking for a suitable display case.

Donations toward such a display case, and inquiries regarding the courses prior to conference, should be addressed to STI, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 104, Los Angeles, CA 90029. †

HOW A VICAR LEARNED THE NAKED TRUTH

(Editor's note: Thanks to the Rev. Jose von Buhler and the Rev. Art Ramirez of MCC Thames Valley, England for bringing a chuckle into my day with the following story which appeared in their local newspaper "Fleet News".

An anonymous clergyman was annoyed when no one answered his knock at the door of a house, reports the parish magazine at Normanton, Derby.

He left his visiting card, writing on it "Revelation 3:20, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him (sic)."

The next Sunday a woman attended church service and gave the vicar her card inscribed: "Genesis 3:10". The vicar looked it up and read: " I heard thee in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and hid myself."†

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

MCC-LA VANDALIZED

MCC-LA was the victim of a late-night break-in May 9. The unknown individuals used a crowbar to gain entry to the building, and once inside, broke into every office. Among the items taken were electric typewriters, Pastor Jeri Harvey's stereo cassette deck, and the receipts from the offering taken at the May 9 evening service.

Pastor Harvey estimated that it would cost approximately $4000 to repair the damage resulting from the vandalism alone. The church has hired a security guard to watch over the premises until the building can be secured. Although every lock in the building was broken, and every office ransacked, the sanctuary was left untouched. †

Letters

Dear Editor,

I just received a letter about the prison ministry workshop that was to be held in Washington, D.C. on April 6-7.

"I am sorry to inform you that the conference "Christians Belong IN Jail" has been cancelled due to lack of interest. There have been many responses from agencies. . . .however you are the only person outside of MCC-DC who has even shown an interest in what we were doing."

Somehow that says a lot about our Fellowship. We are so involved in doing all the things that we want to do, going to the bars, having socials, selling tickets for the up-coming drag show, or planning on attending the gay rights march on Washington that we do not pay attention to the instructions that we were given by Christ.

Is our job to minister to the needy, the poor in spirit? Do we reach out our hand to others to help, or just to have a good time? I think that every Christian should take a good look at him/herself and decide if they are going in the right direction.

What are we, as individuals, doing to help spread the word, the good news of Christ, God's gift to us?

It is a shame that the conference on our prison ministry was cancelled. It is a real shame that the reason was lack of interest.

Rich Roberts
Philadelphia, PA

Dear Editor,

In response to R.W.'s letter in the Feb/Mar '79 issue of In Unity, it seems that R.W.'s grasp of the concerns being expressed about the new standards is not equal to his/her sophmoric wit.

Even a brief study of church history would show R.W. that the Holy Spirit is the vivifying force in the Church and that when humanly made rules and regulations are substituted for sensitivity to the leading of the Spirit, the Church strangles on those rules; Church leaders lose touch with the felt needs of the people to whom they're supposed to be ministering; and liberty in Christ loses out to legalism. And that is the first concern.

The second concern is over what is perceived to be an increasingly dogmatic stance on the mode of preparation for ministry. Presumably, no one denies the worth of seminaries, Bible schools, etc. However, a carefully supervised course of individualized instruction and intensive reading can be equally effective in preparing a student for ministry, to which the great catechetical schools of the early Church and the great English universities of today bear witness.

Thirdly, there is concern that an unbalanced pursuit of academic excellence will breed in our ministers what it tends to breed in other graduates -- elitism, "professionalism" (in the worst sense of that word), and arrogance. Academic credits do not make a minister; the initiative still lies with God, who (at least until now) has not been and is not bound by grades and credits. Witness, for example, the ministry of D. L. Moody.

Perhaps if R.W. devoted less time to sarcasm and more time to really listening to those in this Fellowship who are expressing some very real concerns and anxieties, we'd all be better off.

Sincerely,

Rev. Philip Speranza

Dear Editor,

Perhaps In Unity readers will be able to help me find my 1971 Datsun pick-up truck. In February, Mark Warren, a 27 year old house painter called Christ Chapel MCC, Santa Ana with a story that he was broke and was going to be kicked out of his motel room. When I picked him up he said that he had a chance to paint a house the next day and wouldn't have to move out of the motel. The next day or so, he called and asked if he could borrow my pick-up because that would enable him to get more jobs. The next time I called him, he had split. His two references in Chicago do not know where he is. The pick-up is easy to spot because it has a funny black iron frame around the back that holds a home-made camper shell. It is also newly-painted maroon, carries registration number P L 521 441 412 and its California plates (977 97T) expire March 1979. If you spot the truck near a gay bar, let the air out of the tires and call me collect (714) 497-2142 or 752-1220! Perhaps Mark could be persuaded to turn it in to the nearest MCC.

Thanks,

Rodger Harrison.

Dear Editor,

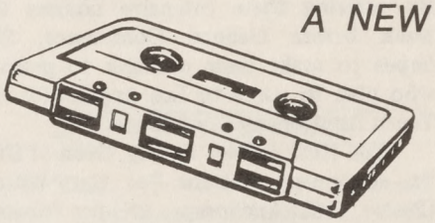
Thank you for a very artistic layout job in the April/May issue of In Unity. I think it was a great idea to use the illustrations of Rockwell Kent and a nicely done cover by Jean Gralley.

I know that a lot of effort goes into putting together a magazine, as I recall from a few years ago when I was a student at Yale.

Hope you'll do more of this kind of thing.

David Gregory
Raleigh, N.C.

A NEW WORD THAT WORKS!



In Unity/The Gay Christian is now available on cassette tapes, beginning with the April/May 1979 issue!

Help bring the UFMCC and a message of God's love to the blind, the sight-impaired, or to the sighted person who would enjoy listening to In Unity in the privacy of the home or car.

Please rush my order for:

___ Single issue(s) @ $6.00 ea.
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___ Enclosed is $30.00 for a six-issue (one year) subscription on cassette.

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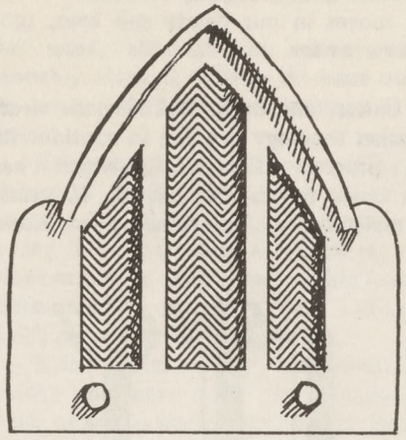
PAT TOWNSON

Spreading the Gospel



Via Airwaves

A few months ago in the News Composite column, I commented on the anti-gay efforts made by Guy Charles, an ex-gay activist out of Washington, D.C. I had the privilege, a few years ago, of arranging a rebuttal program over radio station WYCA, the Christian gospel fundamentalist radio station in Hammond, Indiana. Jim Hill, then the assistant pastor at Good Shepherd Parish MCC in Chicago, participated in "Dialogue", a late-night, telephone call-in program on WYCA. Three weeks before, Charles had appeared on the show to preach his anti-gay gospel, and promote the work of Sanctuary House, his organization in Arlington, Virginia. Through the efforts of my attorney, WYCA agreed to provide a rebuttal period, on which Jim Hill and Guy Charles would discuss the issue of gay Christians.

The rebuttal (and subsequent consciousness raising) would never have taken place had not a very dear friend of mine been addicted to the interesting hobby of broadcast DX'ing -- the technical name for someone who enjoys fiddling around with radios late at night, scanning the dial for unusual programs and stations from distant places.

Now, WYCA is not that far away, but it was tuned in quite by accident that night, and without realizing that the station was almost in Chicago, my friend froze in attention when, turning the dial, he heard the words, "gay people in response. . ." come from the speakers. The program host announced the call-in numbers for callers from our area code, and, of course, we jumped right on the phone to start answering the vicious comments being broadcast.

Did you know that the "powerhouse" radio stations on the AM band push fifty thousand watts of power out into the sky night after night, and are heard virtually everywhere in the country? For example, Radio KOA from Denver broadcasts a talk show nightly and encourages telephone callers from anywhere hearing the show. WLS and WCFL in Chicago, and other stations from both the east and west coasts do the same. KOA is heard easily in Chicago; WLS (which gets its call letters from the World's Largest Store when the Sears, Roebuck chain was operating it in the twenties) is picked up through large parts of Canada, and throughout the southwestern United States. The list goes on, but there are about twenty extremely powerful stations in the US and Canada which get between one and two million listeners each during the late night and early morning hours. And all of them, at various hours on various days are waiting to hear from you, the listener, on their various call-in programs. Even Jim Hill, on little WYCA, got about fifty thousand listeners that night.

Now of those late night listeners, imagine the number of lonely gay men and women in far away places, perhaps many of them small-town USA people, without a single gay contact. Think about how much it means to hear a sister or brother on the radio saying, in effect, that gay is good. Think of the high school kids, scared to death of the very personal feelings they have been experiencing. Do you realize the potential for witnessing for our Lord through the use of the phone and the radio waves? And the best part is that you don't need a special education, or credentials, as your pastor must have to reach out to the men and women who need your support. Just be yourself, and open your heart to the listeners. It is an especially good feeling you receive when you witness to lonely gay people in far away places.

Almost any good radio will pull in distant stations, but to do it best, buy a radio with a good band-spread (large tuning dial) and construct an efficient antenna, following the simple instructions available in any Radio Shack store. When your equipment is set up, start searching out stations. The best time, I have found, is late at night, when many local stations have signed off the air, and the airwaves are relatively uncluttered. For example, when one of our local stations in Chicago goes off every night around 9 pm, Radio CJR from Toronto comes booming in. Some more distant stations are very difficult to tune in, but with a little practice you will learn how it is done.

When you hear a talk show in progress, listen until the announcer gives the station ID, and the name of the town. Usually about that time, the announcer will also give the number to use for callers. Small local stations will frequently NOT give the area code with the number, since they assume their callers are local. That is why you need to know the town, and state, so that you can place your call correctly. Most of the little stations, if they know you are calling long distance, will put you on ahead of other callers, if you request it in order to save on phone charges. The bigger stations expect a lot of long distance calls, and usually will not give this extra service. The larger stations almost always give an area code with their number, and on some stations, special lines are set up to receive calls, such as 800 toll-free lines. The announcer may say something like "tonight we will accept collect calls from listeners in Iowa" or some such place, so do listen for special instructions before calling. Do not be discouraged if the lines are always busy when you call — only a thousand or so other listeners are trying to get in also.

Pay special attention in scanning the dial for shows that have a gay rights theme for the evening (there are usually one or two a week), because they will certainly give more time to a caller with gay subject matter than some of the others might do. Don't forget, there is a seven second delay between when you speak, and when it goes over the air, required by the FCC so that the station can censor obscene or improper remarks. Therefore, when you get on the air, turn your radio down, and listen over the phone, or terrible confusion will result. Unfortunately, this means you can't listen to yourself over the radio.

Once you try this unique method of witness, you will find it so much fun you will get as hooked on it as I am. Let only your conscience and your phone bill be your guide! †

The Christian Church has been guilty of errors, mistakes and apostasy, but in no single area more terribly than in its failure to take with absolute seriousness the Galilean model for God's nature and God's activity.

We hear that God is the King, before whom all creatures are cringing subjects. God is the moral dictator, before whom earthly creatures are obedient servants. God is the remote first cause, from whom human creatures are very far indeed. And of course, as a corollary, an adjective modifying all those nouns, "Oh, yes, God is Love, too."

Now that is absolutely screwy, if you're a Christian. This is the greatest apostasy, and I say this not for any other reason than that I have read the New Testament!

The *primary model* of God is pure, unbounded Love, the Love that once was acted out in human loving in the Man of Nazareth, who, having loved his own that were in the world, loved them to the very limit of all possibility. As that wonderful text in the first letter of St. John says, it isn't that we love God, it is that God loved us, and gave us God's own son, that we might live through him. Anything and everything that a responsible Christian, priest or laity, has to say about sex, and about straightness and gayness, must be dependent upon that essential Christian affirmation. God, said Dante in *The Divine Comedy*, is "the Love that moves the sun and other stars." If Christian faith be true, God moves in our hearts and lives, too, whoever we are.

Unless, and until, that is made clear, Christian theology is going to continue its rake's progress into nonentity, which it has been doing for the last 20, 30, 40 years. The real meaning of all the new movements, theological, liturgical, moral, can be found right there: the rediscovery of the basic Christian model of God — God as the cosmic Lover. To call God omnipresent is to say that cosmic Love is everywhere, available to all creatures. To call God omniscient is to say that cosmic Love knows and understands all that goes on in our secret hearts. To call God omnipotent is not to talk about coercive power let loose in the world, but it is to say that there is only one ultimate power, and that is cosmic Love, however long it may take for cosmic Love patiently to win its way.

And what are human beings? We are not fixed entities. Human beings are growing, developing creatures. I like to say there is no such thing as human *beings* — there is only human *becoming*.

If I am truly growing toward the goal which fulfills all the potentiality that God is constantly placing before me, and towards which our Creator lures me by all sorts of devious means; if I am becoming human, becoming towards the image of God, then I am becoming more and more a created, finite lover, reflecting the divine Love that is God in person, and open to use as a personalized agency for the expression of that Love in the human situation.

What does it mean to be human? It means to be on the way towards created loverhood, in society with my fellow creatures, located in the world of nature, and expressing, to some degree and in some manner, the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.

In that process of becoming human, we have to make decisions. We have relative freedom to choose. "Decision" comes from a Latin root *decidere*, meaning to cut off. Choice is a cutting off of possibilities. If I choose *this* way, I cut off the possibility of acting *that* way.

And what I decide has consequences. And for those consequences, as a self-conscious and understanding routing of body, mind, spirit, existence, I must accept responsibility. This is why we say that human beings are moral.

I used to like to quote G. K. Chesterton: "You cannot very meaningfully say to a crocodile, 'Be a crocodile,' " because the damned thing IS a crocodile, to the limits of its crocodility. But you can say to a person, "Be a human being," and that means responsibly decide that you will realize the potentiality which God continually sets before you. Now, the sad fact of human existence is represented by a much misunderstood word, sin. Anybody who doesn't understand that (s)he is a sinner is convicted of being a damned fool. By sin (granted all that I have been saying in this attempt to reconceive the meaning of the traditional faith which is ours) one does not mean the violation of a whole set of commandments, whether they be Moses' Ten or some other codification. The basic meaning of sin is the violation, not of laws, but of relationships, with the cosmic Lover, and with other created, finite, lovers-in-the-making. *(continued page 14)*

QUALITY IS WHAT COUNTS

Norman Pittenger

Dr. Pittenger, internationally renowned advocate of process theology, lectures at King's College, Cambridge University, England. He is the author of many books, including *Gay Lifestyles*, published by the Universal Fellowship Press. This article, condensed and edited by Howard Erickson of Lutherans Concerned, was taken from Dr. Pittenger's address at the first annual convention of Integrity. The full text is included in *In Celebration*, available from Integrity/Chicago, Box 891, Oak Park, IL, 60303.

News Composite

PAT TOWNSON

In the Feb/Mar issue of In Unity, the News Composite column touched upon a dispute between faculty members at Northwestern University (NW) and Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (GETS), a Methodist supported school affiliated with the University, located in Evanston, IL. The basis for the dispute was Garrett's dismissal of two candidates for the ministry of the United Methodist Church on the grounds of their declared homosexuality, and the opposition of the UMC to that lifestyle. A number of readers have requested follow-up information on that dispute, especially regarding the results of a conference held in February to deal with the issue.

The source for the information that follows is the Rev. William Krick, a Methodist minister in Chicago, active with Affirmation, the organization for gay Methodists and their friends. Krick was interviewed by Patrick Townson in early April, and he commented that basically nothing would change.

Said Krick, "If the situation arose again, the response by Garrett would be the same, although the school would probably attempt to keep the issue out of the press, and a little more under cover this time."

Krick continued, "Theoretically, the University could, if it chose to do so, create a lot of trouble for Garrett — by raising its rent to some astronomical sum, for example, or causing some other form of harrassment — but they (the University itself) are not going to do that."

Krick pointed out that individual faculty members make the decision to work, or not to work, with Garrett. He said that a number of faculty members had commented that under no circumstances would they again choose to work with Garrett, but he emphasized that decisions of that sort were individual ones, not University-wide, nor by official University sanction. It appears that Northwestern would prefer to remain quietly on the sidelines, if possible.

Krick also indicated that regardless of how Garrett reacted, the school (GETS, not NWU) would suffer financially, since a substantial number of independent donations come from persons of a more liberal persuasion. Many of these donors have since stated their intent to discontinue financial support. Of course, the opposite reaction by Garrett would have most likely resulted in a sizeable cut, if not complete suspension, of funding through the United Methodist Church.

Northwestern University is not affiliated with the UMC. The relationship with Garrett has always been a cooperative one, with NW awarding degrees to Garrett students, and providing faculty members and resources.

Krick concluded the interview by stressing his disagreement with Townson's report in an earlier issue of In Unity which indicated that the UMC Book of Disciplines "put down" homosexuality. He stressed that the Book of Disciplines made no specific objection to homosexual pastors. †

Patrick Townson encourages your feedback to his columns. All correspondence should be addressed to him at POB 1003, Chicago, IL, 60690.

JOINT STATEMENT ISSUED ON WASHINGTON MARCH

The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, Integrity, Inc., and the Gay Rights National Lobby jointly issued the following statement regarding the proposed March on Washington:

"A national March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights is being planned for October 14, 1979, in Washington, D.C. After careful consideration we have decided that this particular action at this point in time is not a priority for us. Further, it does not seem to us to have sufficient focus to merit the diversion of resources that this effort would entail. Such a march would require major expenditures of time and resources which our organizations feel are more urgently needed elsewhere in the Lesbian and Gay communities, both locally and nationally.

We recognize different strategies and priorities exist within every movement. Therefore, although our organizations will not take an active role in organizing for the march, we will not oppose or interfere in this effort." †

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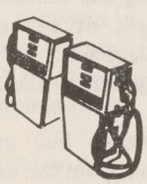
WE, THE EVANGELISTIC TEAM, have been shocked at how the price for gas is going up all the time. We expected it, but we didn't know how much. We burn regular in the truck which is harder on the engine, but cheaper. If we have just a few people to share in this expense, we won't have to raise our budget for spiritual renewals. We are asking that any of you that can donate $5 per month for gas please fill out the form below and send it to us. This way we can know how we are going to keep up with this expense. We have already put 9,000 miles on the new bus and we project another 20,000 miles or more by the end of the year. That is a lot of gas. If you want to help please contact us, so we can project our travel expenses. God bless you for your help and faith!

I would like to pledge $_____ per month until 1980 for gas. I will be sending it on the_____of every month to P.O. Box 371, Galena Park, Texas 77547.



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I Quit!

Observations of a Survivor

Tere Ann Roderick

I have survived being a part of this Fellowship!

Although I believe this statement is inherently true, I can already envision the indignation, even anger, of people responding to that remark. Still, each time I visit those MCC's with which I have been affiliated, I realize the validity of the term survival in regard to the longevity of service of our members and ministers (both lay and professional).

But what of those who have not "survived"? Why have they chosen to discontinue their association with us, and what prompted that decision? Was it their fault? Ours? Will epidemic "burn out", in time, affect us all?

For those who have decided to leave, I am certain that the reasons for severing the ties with MCC are as varied as the personalities of the former members themselves. And I speak only in generalizations based on my personal observations. However, I wonder how large a role the condition called "burn out" actually plays as a determining factor in these departures.

"Burn out" is a catch-all phrase, used to describe everything from physical and emotional breakdown to plain disinterest. I believe it needs to be defined more and used less; therefore, I will attempt to differentiate between "burn out" and other forms of disenchantment.

"Burn out" refers to a state of physical, emotional, and, worst of all, spiritual exhaustion. Persons experiencing this exhaustion often cannot find the incentive essential to the fulfillment of church obligations, making it difficult to maintain the necessary interest for even minimal involvement in the congregation.

Called accidie by the ascetics,* this type of feeling primarily affects our ministers (both lay and professional) and our most involved members, even as the most active ascetics were stricken.

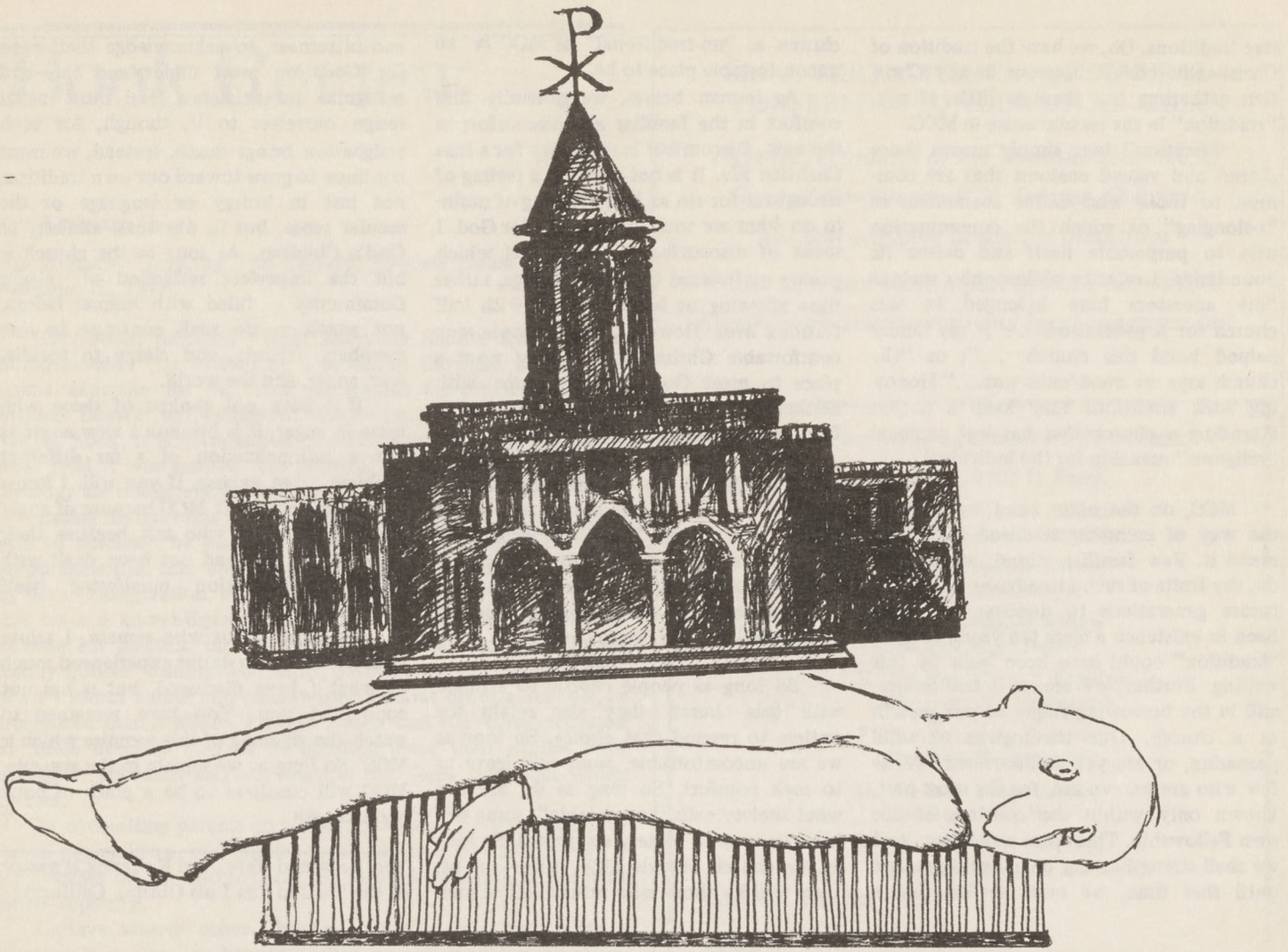
There has been a great deal of speculation regarding the cause of such a condition. It appears to strike individuals who spend long hours, days, even years, trying to build the church. Initially, it becomes apparent in small things left undone — not from lack of desire, but from lack of energy to accomplish them. This is often a temporary state, but if it is not recognized, and dealt with, it can cause permanent damage to a person's Christian life and desire to serve in MCC.

Too often we feel that the situation will disappear, or "cure" itself, if we ignore it. Such is rarely the case. Far more often, the sufferer feels that others are unconcerned, indifferent, which only fuels this already-uneasy feeling, causing them to disassociate themselves from the church and its membership.

Rather than admitting our uneasiness, we have often made light of this great problem, and we have alienated some fine ministers and members by being callous to their crises of faith.

This alienation process has many aspects, one of which stems from the desire of many clergy and laity to re-create, in

*persons who lead lives of contemplation and rigorous self-denial for religious purposes.



MCC, the church of their past.

This search for traditionalism is only rarely beneficial. We have gained and learned a great deal from our differing church backgrounds, but that is where our former doctrines should remain — in the background. We are not here to be a carbon copy of any present-day denomination. We must keep sight of our uniqueness — a uniqueness not entirely dependent upon our sexuality.

Whenever we attempt to fashion MCC in the image of another denomination, we abuse the special ministry that belongs to MCC. Disenchantment with this church is inevitable whenever we use MCC to relive our pasts, especially since the concept of MCC is so different from those of other denominations.

We also run the grave risk of mass disenchantment when we attempt to make MCC a conglomeration of several other denominations, especially in our liturgy. We rely on what has worked in other churches rather than build our own traditions. As a result, our special qualities are not used. Since this church then seems to be a mere stop-gap measure, lasting until the other denominations accept gays, the question becomes whether or not there is any lasting value in MCC. The longer misconceptions like this persist, the more we shall find members returning to the churches they once called home.

As other denominations begin to accept gay people as members and clergy, we shall undoubtedly witness some of our members returning to those churches. This does not necessarily indicate failure on the part of MCC. We should rejoice that these people have kept their faith alive through their associations with us. Our duty to them was simply preventative in nature. We helped them to retain, and perhaps strengthen, their personal relationships with God. That is not, however, our primary goal, but a mere by-product of our ministry, and we must remain aware of that fact.

So often I hear people who attend Metropolitan Community Church (even some ministers) refer to themselves as Catholics, Mormons, Baptists and the like. This is what I consider to be one of our failures. These people are not yet really MCC'ers, but are still living in their denominational pasts. I find little security in this knowledge, and often wonder how long it will be before these persons, like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, realize they "aren't in Kansas anymore".

And what happens then? Often such a person feels lost in this church and leaves to find the comfort of the church s/he attended. Worse yet, some leave the church altogether because, while they appreciate the freedom to be themselves and to worship God, they cannot reconcile their complicated doctrine with the simple tenets of MCC, nor the guilt feelings derived from that doctrine with the acceptance of our humanity shown in MCC.

Finally, thank God, there appears to be a goodly number who, realizing that MCC is unique, embrace that uniqueness and become, fully, a part of this church.

It is because we are both young and unique that we have, in essence, no collec-

tive traditions. Oh, we have the tradition of Christ-centeredness inherent in any Christian gathering, but there is little, if any, "tradition" in the secular sense in MCC.

"Tradition" here simply means those shared and valued customs that are common to those who define themselves as "belonging" or which the denomination uses to perpetuate itself and define its boundaries. I refer to philosophies such as "my ancestors have belonged to this church for X generations. . ."; "my family helped build this church. . ."; or "the church says we must/must not. . ." Honoring such traditions may keep a person attending a church that has lost personal "religious" meaning for the individual.

MCC, on the other hand, has little in the way of common tradition to recommend it. Few families attend, and if they do, the fruits of such attendance will be for future generations to discover. We have been in existence a mere ten years, so little "tradition" could have been built by this writing. Further, we are, as I said before, still in the borrowing stages of our growth as a church. Our theologians are still preparing, or are yet undiscovered. Those few who are known are, for the most part, known only within the confines of our own Fellowship. Their time will come. And we shall strengthen our own traditions. But until that time, we must realize that a church as "un-traditional" as MCC is an uncomfortable place to be.

As human beings, we generally find comfort in the familiar and discomfort in the new. Discomfort is necessary for a true Christian life. It is not so much a feeling of wrongness for sin as it is a feeling of desire to do what we could and should for God. I speak of discomfort as being that which pushes us forward to greater things, rather than allowing us to be content with half fulfilled lives. However, many people seek comfortable Christianity -- they want a place to meet God on their terms, with neither guilt for their frailties, nor longing for the totality of what they might be.

For such people seeking the liberation of MCC without the obligations of Christ-life, the role of this church in the world comes as a shock. They find discomfort too high a price to pay for growth, so many flee to the safe haven of the world or the "comfortable" church that is dedicated to the gospel of the "status quo".

So long as people *choose* to affiliate with this church, they also retain the option to rescind that choice. So long as we are uncomfortable, some will leave us to seek comfort. So long as we are not what society calls "respectable", some will leave us to seek society's approval. So long as the church outside MCC condemns us, there will be those who refuse, out of pain and bitterness, to acknowledge their need for God. We must understand this and recognize its existence. We must never resign ourselves to it, though, for such resignation brings death. Instead, we must continue to grow toward our own tradition, not just in liturgy or language or the secular sense, but in our total ministry as God's Children. As long as the church is but the imperfect reflection of God's Community filled with human beings, not angels -- we shall continue to lose members, friends, and clergy to accidie, fear, anger, and the world.

If I have not spoken of those who leave in anger, it is because I view anger as but a rationalization of a far different problem -- an excuse, if you will. I know few people who left MCC because of anger alone, but many who left because their other difficulties had not been dealt with and the frustration manifested itself through anger.

To those of us who remain, I salute you! You have no doubt experienced much of what I have discussed, but it has not conquered you. You have remained to watch the ripening of this promise which is MCC. So long as we remain in the struggle, MCC will continue to be a place of hope and strength. †

The Reverend Tere Ann Roderick is pastor of the MCC in San Luis Obispo, California.

JoAnne Wagner:

God's Children in God's House

It is not too often that a service lasts two hours and I don't notice it. But that's what happened last Sunday afternoon at Metropolitan Community Church of Washington, D.C. Last semester in my struggles against sexist language, I found myself identifying with the struggles of other oppressed groups, including the gay community. So I decided it was time I went to see my brothers and sisters at MCC. The love, joy, and caring for one another I witnessed at MCC's worship was refreshing and renewing.

The service "starts" at 2:45, which means people come in and greet each other. It looked like a family reunion -- each person entering the pew was greeted with a hug or a kiss. I saw men couples, women couples, groups of men and women together. Most of us were in our 20's and 30's. When the group of about 100 was seated, we sang some gospel songs led enthusiastically by a layman. Everybody sang with so much gusto, I was happy, privatistic-pietistic refrains notwithstanding.

Then the service "officially" began with a call to worship, and a hymn from the "purple hymnal" (the Methodist Book of Hymns), with majestic organ accompaniment. Larry Uhrig welcomed us all as children of God in God's house. As I looked around, I noticed that people felt freer to put their arm around their friends than I usually do in worship. This freedom created a close, warm, and friendly atmosphere.

Somewhat to my surprise, the sermon was not on gayness, liberation theology, or oppresseion, but priorities and stewardship in the Christian life. Larry Uhrig preaches passionately, but with dignity and authority. He touched many of us as he talked about money, sin, and God. At one point he asked, "How many of us have our heart in somebody or something other than God?" Someone raised their hand. Rev. Uhrig was so taken aback that he began to weep, and continued to preach through his tears. Here was a place where people were themselves in worship, as authentic human beings. I was moved. *continued next page*

JoAnne Wagner is a second-year Masters of Divinity student at Wesley Seminary in Washington D.C. who plans to enter the professional ministry. She is the editor of *The Wesley Journal* (in which this article originally appeared), and is from Linthicum, MD, near Baltimore.

Book Review

Rev. Lawrence Gauer

The Unhappy Gays, by Tim LaHaye, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL, 1978.

This book, subtitled "What Everyone Should Know About Homosexuality", is written by a professed Christian writer, who claims expertise for his work on human temperaments. He is entitled 'Doctor', but, consistent with his pronouncements throughout the book, it is never stated where he attained this degree, or in what field it was granted. His personal biases and fundamentalist theology are boldly evident in this work.

Basing his concepts on a preconceived ideology that 'gayness is akin to sickness', he blatantly strives to outline the catastrophic proportions that this 'epidemic' is reaching, especially in America. By use of exaggeration, he manages to convey to the unwary reader that he is a knowledgeable researcher and counselor. In order to validate his position on the causes, the truth, and the cure, he readily quotes "leading" educators, psychiatrists and psychologists, often without names and consistently without degrees, schools, or recognized qualifications. LaHaye asserts that the 'cures' reported by these notables may be in question since their studies were clinical in approach and not based in the 'Jesus' technique which he uses.

In counselling parents and other Christians, he advocates love for all gay children, and implies that guilt or other tactics, even if they border on the unthinkable, can be used with success and with moral impunity.

LaHaye attacks other Christian churches who have taken a more positive stand on homosexuality, as well as writers who have taken it upon themselves to interpret the scriptures steeped in their tradition to today's world. In his look at "The Church of Sodom", or Metropolitan Community Church, one would assume from his almost sneering account that Christ is never preached, nor the Bible ever used in MCC services.

There are values in reading such material, I believe. It helps us to keep abreast of some of the materials being published today — ones that some of our sisters and brothers on the periphery of our congregations are reading, as they continue their search to understand themselves and their relationship to God. It can also point out to us some of the inherent dangers in approaching a subject area from a predetermined end-result. By being aware of this tactic, which often utilizes the twisting of fact, the bending of reality, and the support of exaggeration, perhaps we can be more objective as we grow in the formation of our own personal faith, leading us to new understanding of the totality of God. †

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In the intercessory prayer, we put our hand on the back of the person in front of us. A friend we went with remarked, "That was the first time I had ever been sitting that close to people I knew were homosexual. I mean, praying, knowing that the person whose hand was on my back was homosexual...I wish I could see that kind of faith (as at MCC) in our Methodist church...I might even go back!"

At Communion one could elect to receive the elements with a friend or individually. Either way, the minister would put his or her her arm around your shoulder and whisper the words of assurance to you. I was anxious to hear what words the minister had for me, and was happy to hear them: "...you are a servant and a true child of God...Never settle for anything less..."

Afterwards we said the Lord's Prayer together, hands joined across the aisles, remembering the unity of Christians everywhere.

Before and after the service we were welcomed with genuine warmth, especially by our fellow students at Wesley from MCC.

It was an experience I'll never forget. The worship was personal and collective, warm yet dignified, joyous yet authentic. I could not help but feel that I had visited a true house of God. †

(PITTENGER continued from page 8)

Jesus, in his activity, his doing, much more than in his teaching, demonstrated precisely what I have been trying to say: that the real trouble with human beings comes from our not being in a relationship of open love towards our fellows, and towards God; and that the right way of living humanly is to be in this open relationship of love with one's fellows and with God. In that context, all of moral theology — just as in relation to the doctrine of God all of the attributes of God — must be seen in the light of the basic assertion that God is sheer love. So, for moral theology, the basic assertion is that there is only one absolute: God alone, and God as love.

Anything that is going to be said must be subject to that criterion. The trouble with a great deal of traditional moral theology is that it has related moral theology to legal enactment rather than to personal fulfillment under God.

Now what in hell has all this got to do with homosexuality? you may ask. Well, I'll tell you. It has to do, first of all, with sexuality.

Being sexual is part of being human. With cats and dogs and other interesting species, animal sexuality obviously has as its primary biological purpose the continuation of the species, or procreation. It is very unfortunate that a good deal of traditional moral theology, in its effort to exalt human beings, has lowered us to the level of the barnyard by saying that our sexuality, like a cat's or dog's, is merely for procreation. But even Pope Paul VI, of whom my Italian friends say he shouldn't know much about these matters because he is a bachelor, has had the grace, in *Humanae Vitae*, to put as the primary meaning of marriage, and hence of sex, affective unitive relationship.

Now I am going to lay this down absolutely: the ground and condition of having any kind of human relationship of an affective sort -- whether it be "Hi, John" on the street, whether it be a friendly encounter, or whether it be of genital, sexual relations — the ground and condition for this is physical and psychological.

It is misleading to call the human sexual system, apparatus and drive, the "reproductive system," as our medical textbooks do. Rather, we should speak of it as the "conjunctive or unitive system", the ground and base for the possibility of relationships entered into deeply with others of our own kind.

Once I was asked by two young men a question which I answered and then put into a book, in a chapter I wrote for a symposium published by the Westminster Press a few years ago, called "Is Gay Good?", edited by a Lutheran sociologist, W. Dwight Oberholtzer. My essay immediately followed Dr. Carl Henry's essay, in which he said "Leviticus!" But mine was quite different, and following several very negative essays, Dr. Oberholtzer put mine! The last part of it tells of these two young men, who said they liked to go to the altar of their parish church and together receive communion after having made love like mad the night before. Did I think it was all right?

And I said, "Not only all right, but most wonderful, because you are then worshipping God as well with your bodies

as with the rest of you." You know, in the historic, Catholic, Church, heterosexual couples were not supposed, up until about 200 years ago, to make their communions after sexual intercourse until a day had elapsed!

Personally, I stand with one thing that C. S. Lewis said: "God must like sex; He (sic) made it."

We must not forget the heterosexual. Possibly 85 to 90% of the world do, for reasons best known to themselves or not known at all, prefer to have their relationships with persons of the opposite gender. There are moral guidelines which apply for them, as well as for homosexuals. But they are the same moral guidelines in principle.

I said above that the only moral absolute that can really follow from a right understanding of the Christian faith is: Love God as Love. That at once suggests to us the way in which we must look at the whole moral issue. Putting it in its simplest form, the question is: Does this or that mode of behavior express and augment the reality of shared life together in love?

The Pollyanna view of love, a sort of sweetness and light, gutless niceness, is pretty well dead. No, the word Love is a very strong word. It means a positive concern, goodness in act, readiness to stand up and be counted, the giving of self for the underprivileged and deprived, and those other positive qualities in which human life may rightly be shared. It is not sentimentalism. Sentimentalism is the worst enemy of love because it is totally a pretense -- nice feelings making demanding acts unnecessary.

So when I say that love is the only absolute, morally speaking, I do not mean a sort of bland grin on the face of a vanishing Cheshire cat. I mean genuine, shared concern. I mean getting on board the life of another person and living with complete vulnerability in that other one's life.

The peasants in Spain have a wonderful saying: "To make love is to declare one's sorrow." For there is this strange way in which anguish and ecstasy go together. That is why, in the doctrine of God in Person, a God who does not know anguish cannot be a God who knows joy. And the heresy of the Christian ages has been to make God so immutable and impassible that God cannot share in the anguish of human creatures.

The love which is the basic criterion for all moral judgment is *that* sort of love. Now let us apply this criterion to specific situations that gay people may encounter. The question that is to be asked is: Does this kind of relationship with this particular person promote and augment shared existence, or does it not?

When you leave the person with whom you have just enjoyed sexual union, are you leaving a body that has given you satisfaction, or are you leaving a person with whom you have shared glory, and by the relationship with whom the life of each of you has been enriched?

"Thingifying" another human being is almost the worst sin — to treat anybody as a thing is to deny that person's existence as human. Recently I was in Munich, on my way to Italy, preaching at the Anglican chapel in Munich. The chaplain, a former student of mine, has a lover, who is a beautiful Spanish man. Paco said he thought I needed to be educated, so while his lover was engaged in pastoral duties, Paco took me to the center of Munich to introduce me to a sex boutique. I had not seen one before, which shows how I needed educating, and I was really astounded at the collection of mechanical devices for sale at high prices. I didn't buy, and Paco didn't; we just looked around. And I thought, as we came away and got on the tram, than an awful lot of heterosexual and homosexual contacts are so mechanical that it would be easier just to buy one of those things. I'm not talking necessarily

(continued from page 14)
against those things. I am saying that human beings are not mechanical devices, they are not things.

So the first guideline for both heterosexual and homosexual genital contacts, and all that leads toward them and follows from them, has got to be personalizing relationships.

Secondly, contacts whose setting is destructive are equally damaging to persons in a relationship. When Jean-Paul Sartre describes sexual intercourse, which for him presumably means if not with Simone de Beauvoir then with some other female, really it is appalling. It is like a battle, he says, in which one tries to overcome, possess, and even to destroy the other. I think that could have been learned only in a very second-rate Paris brothel, because not even a good prostitute would act like that.

Any sort of sexual contact which is destructive of the personality, of the self-esteem of the partner, is a denial of love. To understand that a human being is the child of God, and hence to respect the self-esteem of the other, and the integrity of the other, is a condition of any genuinely loving relationship.

As another guideline, there is what in the Middle Ages was called, by St. Thomas Aquinas, in the *Summa Theologica*, "proportion" — seeing the genital sexual act in the context of a total relationship. I suppose most of us would agree that it would be magnificent if we could spend all our time in bed with somebody — a little tiring, physically rather difficult to manage after a bit — yet somebody's got to get up to make the breakfast! There's so much else to do! When genital, physical sexuality is the only thing that's considered important, really (to put it in a half-punning way) people are all screwed up.

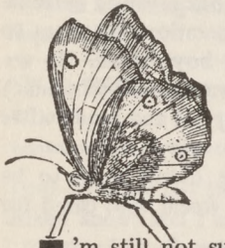
The trouble, you see, with hard-core pornography, so-called, is not the subject matter — sex is swell, wonderful. The trouble is getting the subject matter out of all context. It is part of a Christian's responsibility to see to it that the sense of proportion is kept, so that in our thinking about sexual relationships it isn't the specific genital contact that matters alone, but rather it is sex seen in a wider context.

There is one saying which, despite its being trite, I believe still to be true: "Having sex is always fun; making love is unutterable joy." *(continued page 24)*

Dr. L.A. Siebert

MENTAL ILLNESS

A CRAZY IDEA



I'm still not sure what to do about my discovery.

What would you do if you discovered that thousands of powerful, respected people believe in something that is a delusion? The delusion I am talking about is the idea of "mental illness."

Did you know that psychiatrists have never proven that there is such a thing as "mental illness"? Did you know that very few patients in mental hospitals believe they are mentally ill? Some patients say they are, but most of these are obediently repeating what they have been told they must believe about themselves.

Lawrence A. (Al) Siebert, Ph.D, is a Portland, Oregon writer, lecturer, management psychologist, and workshop leader.

Don't take me wrong, though. I agree that there are people who lose control of themselves, become confused, and do peculiar things. But these actions do not mean that their minds have become infected with an invisible illness.

Several years ago I attended a sanity hearing in which an elderly woman was committed to a state hospital. A married daughter she was living with had filed the commitment petition. The old woman would get confused and wander outside without any clothes on. After the daughter left the judge's chambers, the woman was brought in. The judge asked her several questions and then, after checking with the two physicians present, the judge said to her, "You are mentally ill, and because you are mentally ill, I am committing you to a state hospital."

The woman was distressed and started crying. No one told her that the real reason for her commitment was her behavior. The people in her neighborhood did not want to see a naked old lady walking around.

This kind of honesty is uncommon and that is partly why so many people protest about the manner in which they were committed.

Critics of commitment procedures look at the consequences of involuntary hospitalization — the great distress it causes without corresponding beneficial results — and typically conclude that the people running the system must have bad motives.

But that isn't true. The people who work at discovering and eliminating mental illness sincerely believe it exists. They truly believe they are doing good for people who are too mentally disturbed to appreciate the good being done. They have the very best intentions.

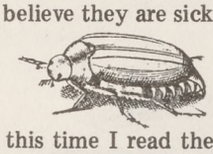
I know, because I was one of them. I wore a long white coat that said "Psychologist" on the pocket, had a key for all the

locked doors, gave psychological tests which could find mental illness in anyone, gave reports at staff conferences, and conducted research and therapy. I did everything they trained me to do. (This was when I was finishing up my graduate work at the University of Michigan and was working as a staff psychologist at the University Hospital Neuropsychiatric Institute.)

But certain questions kept puzzling me. Why are so few people really helped by all this? Why are the patients who resist treatment disciplined by the staff?

Why is the nature of the therapy given determined more by the theoretical view of the doctor than by the person's symptoms? Shouldn't the symptoms determine the therapy?

Why is it that some therapists make their patients worse and no one does anything about it? Why do so many patients look fearful and bewildered? Why do residents argue with patients trying to make them believe they are sick?



About this time I read the book *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand. Through her characters she presents the idea that there are selfish reasons behind all actions — even charitable actions. I was thinking about this when I ran into a psychiatric resident who was standing in the hallway shaking his head as he watched a patient walk away. I asked:

"What's wrong?"

He said:

"That patient refused to believe I'm working entirely for his own good!"

"Are you?"

"Of course!"

"Do you enjoy being a doctor?"

"Yes."

"Do you feel good when you're able to help someone overcome their distress?"

"Yes."

"By working with him aren't you learning how to be a psychiatrist?"

"Yes."

"If you succeed with him won't the nurses and supervisors think well of you?"

"Yes."

"If you help him won't you gain his appreciation?"

"Yes."

"If you get him out of the hospital won't that help reduce your taxes?"

"Yes."

"If he's out doing a good job supporting himself won't that make the world a better place for you to live in?"

"Yes."

"And you want him to believe that you're working entirely for his own good?"

"But I am!" he protested, and walked off.

I stood there shaking my head. Here was observable evidence that a person who claims "I am only doing this for your own good" is highly self-deluded. The need to believe that statement can blind people to their own selfish motives and the consequences of their actions.

But why does the human mind do this?

The key to the answer seemed to be esteem. But how does it work?

I noticed many people upset by Muhammed Ali bragging about how great he is. Why should a person be distressed by someone else's feelings of self-esteem? Why is it supposed to be "sick" if someone says he feels like he is Christ or Napoleon?

At staff rounds I heard that an 18-year-old girl had been brought in by her parents because she claimed that God talked to her. For several weeks the morning reports about her were the same. She was withdrawn. She wouldn't do anything. She wouldn't talk to her doctors or to the nurses.

Finally the senior psychiatrist suggested that plans be made to commit her to the state hospital. The staff opinion was that since she was such a severe "paranoid schizophrenic" she would probably spend the rest of her life in the state hospital.

I arranged to interview her. Before meeting her I asked myself:

"What will happen if I make my mind remain silent? If I don't let my mind put any psychiatric labels on her?"

"What will happen if I talk to her believing that she could become a good friend?"

The nurse brought her to the ward dining room and introduced us. The girl glanced quickly at me but didn't say anything. She was frightened and lonely. Instead of trying to talk with her I got her busy drawing and making some designs with blocks. She gradually warmed up to me and finally looked cautiously at me. Here are the highlights of our conversation:

"Why are you here in a psychiatric hospital?"

She: "God spoke to me and said I was going to give birth to the second savior."

"That may be, but why are you here in the hospital?"

She: (startled): "Well, that's crazy talk."

"According to whom?"

She: "What?"

"Did you decide that when God spoke to you that you were crazy?"

She: "Oh. No, they told me I was crazy."

"Do you believe that you're crazy?"

She: "No, but I am, aren't I."

"If you put that in the form of a question, I'll answer you."

She: "Do you think I'm crazy?"

"No."

She: "But that couldn't have happened could it?"

"As far as I'm concerned, you're the only person who knows what happens in your mind. Did it seem real at the time?"

She: "Oh, yes."

"Tell me what you did after God spoke to you."

She: "What do you mean?"

"Did you start knitting booties and sweaters and things?"

She (laughing): "No, but I did pack my clothes and wait by the door several times."

"One thing I'm curious about."

She: "What?"

"Why is it that of all the women in the world God chose you to be the mother of the second savior?"

She (brightly): "You know, I've been trying to figure that out myself!"

"What things happened in your life before God spoke to you?" (Here she described how her parents never praised her for her accomplishments in school or the many helpful things she did around the house. She tried very hard to succeed in a nursing school course but received extreme criticism. Out of desperation, she went to visit her high school boy friend. He announced that he only wanted to be friends.)

"Were you feeling sad and lonely after that?"

She: "Yes, there didn't seem to be anyone in the whole world who cared for me at all."

"And then God spoke to you."

She: "Yes."

"How did you feel after God gave you the good news?"

She (warmly smiling): "I felt like the most special person in the whole world."

"That's a nice feeling, isn't it?"

She: "Yes, it is."

"I must go now."

She: "Please don't tell them what we've been talking about. No one seems to understand."

"I know what you mean. I promise not to tell if you won't."

She: "I promise."

Two days later I was walking through the ward and she stopped me. She said:

"I have been *(continued next page)*

The Bottom Line

t. earlye scott

When the editor of *In Unity* told me I could take a rest and not submit an article this time, I must admit that that sounded appealing. Then of course, I considered you readers and realized it wouldn't be fair to leave you hanging, dying of curiosity to learn what actually happened the day I had to face THE RUMOR*, as we now affectionately call it.

So, even though I'm in the midst of winding up the school year and ending my 10 year teaching career, here we go . . . oh, responsibility.

I was prepared for the worst the day God walked to school with me. I had a fantasy of the principal, the superintendent and the school board president waiting for me when I arrived. I knew they would usher me into the office, push me down into a straight-back wooden chair and turn on the bright spot light.

The interrogation would begin. They would call me dirty names and then insult me. This would all end by these angry disgusted men firing me. The ultimate humiliation would come when they demanded my classroom keys. Exhausted and broken, I would leave my school a ruined educator while they laughed, pleased with themselves for saving today's youth.

I knew that as I walked through the halls, students would point and curse and make faces while my colleagues ignored me. No one would have anything to do with such as me.

But, when I got to the main office to pick up my mail, no one gave me a second glance. I didn't know how to react to this. Since I still had possession of my keys, I went to open my room. No bomb exploded when I turned the key. The chalk boards were clean, free from obscenities. How strange. I just shrugged my shoulders — I wasn't about to go looking for trouble. I was certain it would find me soon enough.

My students arrived with their usual cheerful greetings and obedient natures and the last bell for first hour rang. Already I felt like it was round three and we were coming out of our corners again.

My stomach had settled down and my class was busy working on a composition when I felt a hand rest gently on my shoulder. It was HIM. The Principal. I thought he'd send for me, not make a personal visit.

"Good morning, Ms. Scott. How are you today?" he said pleasantly enough. I figured he was trying to soften me up to catch me off guard.

"Hi," I responded. I quickly tried to remember all the sane tactics we had so diligently schemed over the night before. I drew a blank.

He continued in this chatty manner, asking after my health and my plans for vacation. Patting me on the back in a fatherly way, he left. I was shocked. What was this all about anyway? Was he just playing games with me — teasing in order to make the kill more sporting for him? I was confused. The bell rang. Round four.

On my way to get my morning cup of coffee, I ran into the assistant principal. Since he is not as smooth, I figured he would be less tactful. Just as that thought entered my head, he threw his arm around me saying, in an overly concerned way, "How ya doing?"

I replied that I was fine and when I said this, he looked at me sympathetically and said, "Are you sure?"

Was I sure? I only felt like a deathrow convict awaiting execution.

The bell rang. Round five. I had sent a note to a colleague friend, figuring she might have heard something since her office is near the principal. As I suspected, people were trying to find out "the truth". Everyone was whispering and talking about THE RUMOR. Apparently, no one had any intentions of discussing this matter with me. No bright lights, no interrogation, no dismissal — not yet anyway. *(cont'd. pg.26)*

*THE RUMOR — that I had married a woman.

(cont from pg 16) thinking about what we talked about and I wonder. . .do you think I imagined God's voice to make myself feel better?"

I said: "Perhaps," and shrugged.

I suspected that was the answer but didn't know for sure without more confirmation. The other doctors and nurses could do what they wanted but from me she was going to get friendship!

The morning reports indicated an immediate improvement in her. Plans to commit her were dropped. In two weeks she was transferred to the open ward and staff expectations were that she would soon be discharged.

Since then my inquiries have confirmed the accuracy of what I learned. When I keep my mind quiet and learn about people as unique individuals, accepting them as they are, then things go well. Sometimes, if they wish, I can help them with a practical tip on how to deal with life better.

As I said at the start, my problem is what to do with my discovery. When I was still naive about how welcome this knowledge would be to the people who claim they want to eliminate "mental illness", I tried explaining it to them. That's when I learned that anyone who is critical of mental illness procedures runs the risk of being perceived as a mentally ill person!

The situation is complicated and it puzzles me. I don't know what to do about it. What do you think? †

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LAY ATTITUTES SURVEY

You need not state your name on this form, but the following information will help us in tabulating results:

1. Please check one: I am a(n) [ ] untitled lay person [ ] deacon [ ] exhorter [ ] board member

2. My predominant religious background is_____ 3. I am [ ] male [ ] female

4. I have been involved with MCC for_____ year(s) and attend an MCC in the _____ district

= = = =

The Human Church

LAY PAGE

Jean Gralley

Passivity is often thought to be the natural state of laypeople. This passivity is so taken for granted that, especially in mainstream Christianity, it has become "business as usual". We in the fellowship — blessed with a vitality other churches can envy — might think our laity quite active (sometimes, judging from the dents and teethmarks in many of our pastors, woefully hyperactive). We're far less inclined to worry about our laypeople being passive than we might be to wish things were just quieter. . . The truth is, the church has always wished things were quieter.

Because lay activity carries weightier negative connotations than positive, the formation of a UFMCC Lay Concerns body has caused some apprehension. But we have to place this apprehension in perspective. It isn't unique to our hyperactive fellowship or to our time. As early as 1292, Pope Boniface VIII observed that "Antiquity teaches us that the laity is in high degree hostile to the clergy." Boniface would have to have admitted that this sentiment is often returned. We laity and clergy carry — and have always carried — certain unkind notions about each other that precede our interactions. The truth is, the church — of which we are both part — has not been structured well for our relations. Although highly conscious of its clergy's history and development, major contributions, stages of growth, purpose and meaning, the church snags on its laity. One half (and it's a hefty half) of the church lacks its history, definition, purpose, identity. This means both clergy *and* laity are not quite sure what to make of the whole lay phenomenon — who they are, and what to do with them when they begin to grow. It is not uncommon for a layperson full of enthusiasm and energy to come to a minister and to have that minister, somewhat at a loss, actually persuade the layperson to return to his/her naturally dormant state. This is not primarily an evil of the minister. *The church itself has not accounted for an active laity.* Centuries of history have developed positions for a tiny percentage of laypeople (in our church, the diaconite and exhortership), but these are modelled on the professional ministry, often even dressed in similar costumes. Beyond this, the church does not provide much room for laypeople who are growing as untitled, unpositioned and non-ministry-bound Christians. As a result, the vast majority of them do not grow — or do not even know they *are* to grow — for lack of space to grow into.

We in MCC are not breaking new ground by dealing with this vast, uncharted territory. We join a host of churches in Christendom re-examining the laity. This Lay Page is to provide information about other churches' progress with the issue, as well as happenings in our own fellowship sponsored by our Committee on Lay Concerns.

But first a foundation.

History is a present possession — it contains the roots of our present-day problems as well as suggests their solutions. It is not true that we laypeople have no history. We have a spectacular history — heroes and martyrs have struggled and died to restore the laity to its proper position in the church. These struggles have always brought about monumental changes in the church, especially in its perspective of the everyday world. For the purposes of this first article, we'll only explore the beginnings of our history.

The Lay Church

The church of the New Testament was composed of diverse peoples. They were Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, men and women, all together for the first time, all reflecting the varied gifts of God. Some were apostles, prophets, teachers; some cooks, donors of homes, some ministers; but all were considered equal servants in the eyes of God. No one imposed power over another. To this early community, *all* people were "laos" (from which we get the word "laity"), all people were "the people of God".

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that at the time (of the early church), all of these people were of the laity. To be of the laos, the people of God, and hence followers of Christ in witness and service, was all the honor and privilege that was felt to be needed.[1]

It's unfortunate that the language that once described a monumental call to service has come to mean those of "amateur" status. The way we cling to our words is evidence of an attidude that can be a major stumbling block to our growth as a Christian body. Actually, there were no divisions in that early church that indicated ranking; there was not a shimmer of an idea, for instance, of a body of people set aside as "clergy".[2] And scripturally, as Michael Harper points out, it's not insignificant that Jesus only used the word "priest" once in his parables, and that was in a derogatory fashion. The priest in the story of the Good Samaritan was too busily religious to bother with the man bleeding in the gutter.[3] The early community shunned pious distinctions. Preachers to cooks, all people were one people — all were *laos*, "the people of God."

These Christians did not meet in temples, special places of priests and priestesses, but in the homes of *people*. They lived together for days and weeks on end, sharing meals and property and their testimonies of the Good News. They received guests and the letters brought with them, fellowshipped, laughed, gossipped, prayed, and planned together. It was an earthy, gutsy, joyous gathering of diverse and common people who every day shared a special blessing of roots and wings: genuine community and genuine vision.

The church still needs roots and wings to be a vibrant Body. It is when we lose our grasp of one of these that we injure the life of the church.

Institutional vs. Church Consciousness

History passes down the churchly institution as well as the Church. It's naive to suppose we can exist in the world without our institution — it's our means of effective and efficient witness in the secular world. It is also naive to suppose the churchly institution does not easily fit the mold of other institutions — for all our righteous objections, it does. For one thing, as in all organizations, democratic as they may be, its identity rests with individual leaders, be they local or international. Just as an army is identified with its brass, a government with its presidents and kings, the church is identified with its elders or popes, ministers or priests. This identification is fast and sure, often to the dismay of those leaders tossed out when people are no longer pleased to have their organization identified with them. *(over)*

Jean Gralley is the chairperson of the UFMCC's Committee on Lay Concerns. She is employed as a graphic artist at the UFMCC offices in Los Angeles.

or, in the very least, coffee. Laypeople differ little from other good-hearted, well-intentioned members of the Rotary Club or PTA.

But what of the church that is not an institution? What of the *church* that is the continuing Body of Christ, called to serve the world as Jesus served? What of the church that is divine and zealous and charged with a mission? Are the people we call laypeople — who may never pursue professional ministry — part of this church?

Centuries of institutionalism answer no.

We have internalized institutional-consciousness; we identify the church with our leadership, the professional clergy. Laypeople may serve the institution, but clergy, it often seems, serve the church. Laypeople who wish to serve in meaningful ways are routed through quasi-clerical positions, or through years of professional training to join the ranks of clergy. How efficient for an institution! How inefficient for a *church* with much work to do! For we aren't called just to maintain the institution, but to utilize the institution to transform the world! Does the church take this to mean the proloferation of the professional ministry, or of people *who minister to one another?*

The Divided Church

The divided church is not just an ecumenical term for our divisions into denominations. It also describes every church that has deeply divided the pulpit from the pew, pastor from people. It is every church that thinks of its people as children who need never grow up, while its pastors are encouraged to be all things to all people all the time. The divided church is one of overwrought ministers who cannot lean on their people for fear of seeming weak or without authority. It is full of laypeople who do not feel part of the church and so waive all responsibility for its work and growth, and even for their own spiritual health. It is full of laypeople who feel their only impact on the church can be in power-tripping and other negative activity. The divided church is not relevant to everyday realities; its people are not incorporated into the life of the church. This church may have vision, but it will lack community and, without these roots, its messages will become pious and remote.

Ultimately, the divided church is any church that has consciously or unconsciously divided clergy from laity into "professional Christian" and "baby Christian" classes, respectively. Although there may be some truth in this distorted image, the dividing line itself denies a truth that unites us as a family — *all* people are growing, *all* people struggle with their faith and *all* people are enabled by grace.

Lay Concerns

This is the foundation for Lay Concerns in this fellowship. Consequently, Lay Concerns is not primarily a political organization; it does not seek more offices, positions or titles for laypeople. It is not even primarily an organization for deacons and exhorters, those we think of as our "lay ministers". But, because God uses us where we are and *as* we are, Lay Concerns is about *all* laypeople, and the *ministry* of all laypeople.

"Family" sets the tone for this ministry and for all our work in Lay Concerns. It describes the human relationship basic to Christianity. By enhancing our "family-sense" in our districts and local churches, we encourage our people (pastors included) to *communicate* with each other. The Lay Concerns meeting at every district conference is set aside for this communication between laypeople (some districts have also held lay-clergy dialogues). At this meeting, facilitated by the district representative to the Committee on Lay Concerns, concerns are expressed and ideas exchanged. Each representative has been supplied with forms that can quickly communicate these concerns to the CLC chairperson and the Board of Elders; some of these have already been received. Many CLC representatives are struggling to keep the communication continuing beyond conference weekends by creating district newsletters, writing their own letters to churches, and visiting district churches themselves. In all these ways, Lay Concerns is not just a district conference "event" but a continuing effort to improve the communication within districts and local churches that will enable these families to grow stronger.

"Family" also connotes reaching out and *enabling* one another. By encouraging laity to share their feelings and ideas, we at the same time encourage them to step out of their traditionally passive/receptive roles, if they are able, and become involved. Many laypeople — titled and untitled alike — have involved themselves, through their district Lay Concerns body, in creating wonderful events. We have had lay conferences in the Northeast, Great Lakes, Northwest and Mid-Atlantic Districts; a lay leadership conference in the Mid-Atlantic District; seminars in lay history in the Northeast and Great Lakes Districts; and the publication of the *Lay Person's Guide to MCC* in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Northwest Districts. Many of the ideas for these events had originated in one district and were shared with other representatives who modified them for their respective districts. Materials and information about them will appear on forthcoming "Lay Pages".

The Fellowship level of the Committee does not impose programs on the districts. Instead, it encourages efforts in the districts and most of the work of the CLC is generated at the district level. For this reason, it is most important that districts elect delegates who are capable facilitators, who are imaginative and will work hard to keep communication lines clear. This has been an actively communicating committee; this Lay Page will help keep the communication of ideas and events even more open, for it will reach clergy and laity simultaneously. And we believe Lay Concerns must be this sort of cooperative effort: clergy need to show laypeople and laypeople need to show clergy the many ways we are meant to *be* the church! †

On page 18 is printed our first Fellowship-wide endeavor, a survey of the backgrounds and attitudes of our entire laity. If you have not received this questionnaire from your CLC representative, please complete it and return it to the address printed at the bottom. The results of this survey will appear in In Unity *and at a Workshop on the Laity to be given at General Conference IX.*

COMMITTEE ON LAY CONCERNS
DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. David Tomkins	AUSTRALASIA
Mr. Jim Heslop	UNITED KINGDOM
Ms. Belle Pellegrino	NORTHEAST
Ms. Jennie Bull	MID-ATLANTIC
Mr. Jerry Mitchell	SOUTHEAST
Ms. Jackie Walker	GREAT LAKES
Mr. George Kennedy	SOUTH CENTRAL
Mr. Michael Mank	NORTHWEST
Ms. Rusty Carlson	SOUTHWEST

Prison Ministry

Rev. Bob Arthur, National Director

Approximately five years ago, an eighteen year old man and a sixteen year old boy (state terminology) were caught having sex together. At that time, the state age of consent was seventeen, so the eighteen year old was arrested for statutory rape. His public defender recommended that he request prosecution under the sexual sociopath laws of the state to avoid a harsh sentence. He agreed, and was convicted and sentenced to an indefinite term in the psychiatric unit of the state prison. He
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romance with a young lady from his high school days in hopes of getting married and proving to his state psychiatrist he has been cured from homosexuality so he can be released.

This type of situation happens frequently. In fact, I know of a similar case going on right now in California. If we as a Fellowship were to become more involved in public statements and pressuring legislators and criminal justice personnel, things like this could be prevented. One national office and 29 representatives around the country are certainly not sufficient.

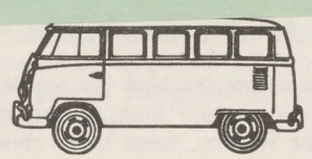
I know that the reaction to this last paragraph will probably be: "That's a neat sentiment, but I just don't have the time, influence, or know-how to do anything about it." Let us consider each of these objections:

TIME: I know it's trite, but it is true that we always find the time to do those things we feel are important. If we consider Matthew 25: 31-46, we might begin to realize that visiting and bringing spiritual

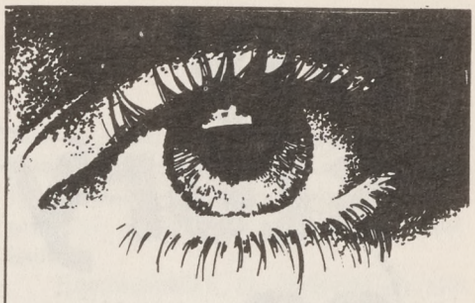
CORRECTION

The following sentences were omitted at the beginning of page 20:

Laypeople also owe much to the institution; it provides their neatly-defined service areas. Laypeople can keep the books (be a treasurer), keep the records (be a clerk), administrate (be a Board member), serve commissions, committees, or, in the very least coffee...



Needs, like people, are different. One of the special needs of the MCC's in Nigeria is a van that can be used for transportation and income. The Board of Elders has established a designated savings account to collect funds for this purpose. If you would like to help fill this special need, send your contribution to: Van Fund, UFMCC, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd. Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029. †



DO YOU KNOW...

...that there are people in your own community who –

- *cannot read this magazine*
- *cannot read your church newsletter*
- *cannot read the statement of faith*
- *have never seen a piece of literature letting them know God loves them!*

YOU CAN

MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Most metropolitan areas provide braille transcribing services free of charge.

Check your phone book or your local public library to find out how you can share the Good News with your neighbors.

". . .that you love one another. . ."
John 15:12

a message from the UFMCC Commission on Innovative Ministries

or, in the very least, coffee. Laypeople differ little from other good-hearted, well-intentioned members of the Rotary Club or PTA.

But what of the church that is not an institution? What of the *church* that is the continuing Body of Christ, called to serve the world as Jesus served? What of the church that is divine and zealous and charged with a mission? Are the people we call laypeople — who may never pursue professional ministry — part of this church?

Centuries of institutionalism answer no.

We have internalized institutional-consciousness; we iden
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The Divided Ch

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all people all the time. The divided church is one of overwrought ministers who cannot lean on their people for fear of seeming weak or without authority. It is full of laypeople who do not feel part of the church and so waive all responsibility for its work and growth, and even for their own spiritual health. It is full of laypeople who feel their only impact on the church can be in power-tripping and other negative activity. The divided church is not relevant to everyday realities; its people are not incorporated into the life of the church. This church may have vision, but it will lack community and, without these roots, its messages will become pious and remote.

Ultimately, the divided church is any church that has consciously or unconsciously divided clergy from laity into "professional Christian" and "baby Christian" classes, respectively. Although there may be some truth in this distorted image, the dividing line itself denies a truth that unites us as a family — *all* people are growing, *all* people struggle with their faith and *all* people are enabled by grace.

Lay Concerns

This is the foundation for Lay Concerns in this fellowship. Consequently, Lay Concerns is not primarily a political organization; it does not seek more offices, positions or titles for laypeople. It is not
for deacons
ends by creating
writing their own letters to churches, and visiting district churches themselves. In all these ways, Lay Concerns is not just a district conference "event" but a continuing effort to improve the communication within districts and local churches that will enable these families to grow stronger.

"Family" also connotes reaching out and *enabling* one another. By encouraging laity to share their feelings and ideas, we at the same time encourage them to step out of their traditionally passive/receptive roles, if they are able, and become involved. Many laypeople — titled and untitled alike — have involved themselves, through their district Lay Concerns body, in creating wonderful events. We have had lay conferences in the Northeast, Great Lakes, Northwest and Mid-Atlantic Districts; a lay leadership conference in the Mid-Atlantic District; seminars in lay history in the Northeast and Great Lakes Districts; and the publication of the *Lay Person's Guide to MCC* in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Northwest Districts. Many of the ideas for these events had originated in one district and were shared with other representatives who modified them for their respective districts. Materials and information about them will appear on forthcoming "Lay Pages".

The Fellowship level of the Committee does not impose programs on the districts. Instead, it encourages efforts in the districts and most of the work of the CLC is generated at the district level. For this reason, it is most important that districts elect delegates who are capable facilitators, who
ive and will work hard to keep
ion lines clear. This has been
communicating committee;
ge will help keep the communi-
leas and events even more open,
reach clergy and laity simul-
And we believe Lay Concerns
his sort of cooperative effort:
ed to show laypeople and lay-
ed to show clergy the many ways
ant to *be* the church! †

18 is printed our first Fellowship-
deavor, a survey of the back-
and attitudes of our entire laity. If
e not received this questionnaire
our CLC representative, please
e it and return it to the address
at the bottom. The results of
vey will appear in In Unity *and at a*
op on the Laity to be given at
l Conference IX.

OMMITTEE ON LAY CONCERNS
ISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. David Tomkins	AUSTRALASIA
Mr. Jim Heslop	UNITED KINGDOM
Ms. Belle Pellegrino	NORTHEAST
Ms. Jennie Bull	MID-ATLANTIC
Mr. Jerry Mitchell	SOUTHEAST
Ms. Jackie Walker	GREAT LAKES
Mr. George Kennedy	SOUTH CENTRAL
Mr. Michael Mank	NORTHWEST
Ms. Rusty Carlson	SOUTHWEST

Prison Ministry

Rev. Bob Arthur, National Director

Approximately five years ago, an eighteen year old man and a sixteen year old boy (state terminology) were caught having sex together. At that time, the state age of consent was seventeen, so the eighteen year old was arrested for statutory rape. His public defender recommended that he request prosecution under the sexual sociopath laws of the state to avoid a harsh sentence. He agreed, and was convicted and sentenced to an indefinite term in the psychiatric unit of the state prison. He was to remain under treatment until the state psychiatrist certified him fit to return to society.

He failed his first yearly examination. When asked how he could be helped to pass the next exam, the state psychiatrist replied that there was no way he could ever pass, for it is a well-known fact that once a person has admitted to being a homosexual, that person will always have those proclivities. He could not certify him safe for return to society until he could guarantee that the patient would never again have a homosexual experience. So, in effect, at eighteen, this man is serving a life sentence.

Since that time, the state has lowered the age of consent to fourteen. It has also been learned that the prosecutor was related to the defender, and both were related to the sixteen year old. Yet the young man is still in the state prison psychiatric unit. After four years of coaxing, the ACLU of that state finally agreed to look into his case, but by this time, the young man was refusing help from them because of their previous refusals of him. Instead, he is developing a romance with a young lady from his high school days in hopes of getting married and proving to his state psychiatrist he has been cured from homosexuality so he can be released.

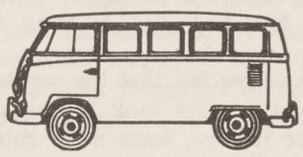
This type of situation happens frequently. In fact, I know of a similar case going on right now in California. If we as a Fellowship were to become more involved in public statements and pressuring legislators and criminal justice personnel, things like this could be prevented. One national office and 29 representatives around the country are certainly not sufficient.

I know that the reaction to this last paragraph will probably be: "That's a neat sentiment, but I just don't have the time, influence, or know-how to do anything about it." Let us consider each of these objections:

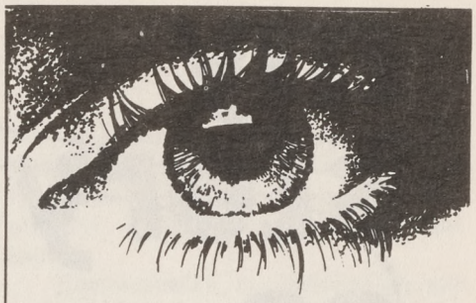
TIME: I know it's trite, but it is true that we always find the time to do those things we feel are important. If we consider Matthew 25: 31-46, we might begin to realize that visiting and bringing spiritual and moral support to prisoners is important enough to find time to do it.

INFLUENCE: This is reminiscent of the statement, "My vote won't make any difference." It's amazing how quickly word spreads through the prison, both prisoners and officials, that there is someone out there who is really caring and concerned. This will create a growing ministry to prisoners, and a little more conscience in the officials' handling of prisoners.

KNOW-HOW: That's why this office has been developed. Please feel free to call or write us for any help we can provide to you in beginning your work in this needy area. We have developed the PRISON MINISTRY HANDBOOK to help anyone get started in this work. They may be ordered from the UFMCC Church Services/ Publications Department, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, LA, CA, 90029, at $2.95 each. †



Needs, like people, are different. One of the special needs of the MCC's in Nigeria is a van that can be used for transportation and income. The Board of Elders has established a designated savings account to collect funds for this purpose. If you would like to help fill this special need, send your contribution to: Van Fund, UFMCC, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd. Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029. †



DO YOU KNOW...

...that there are people in your own community who –

- *cannot read this magazine*
- *cannot read your church newsletter*
- *cannot read the statement of faith*
- *have never seen a piece of literature letting them know God loves them!*

YOU CAN

MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

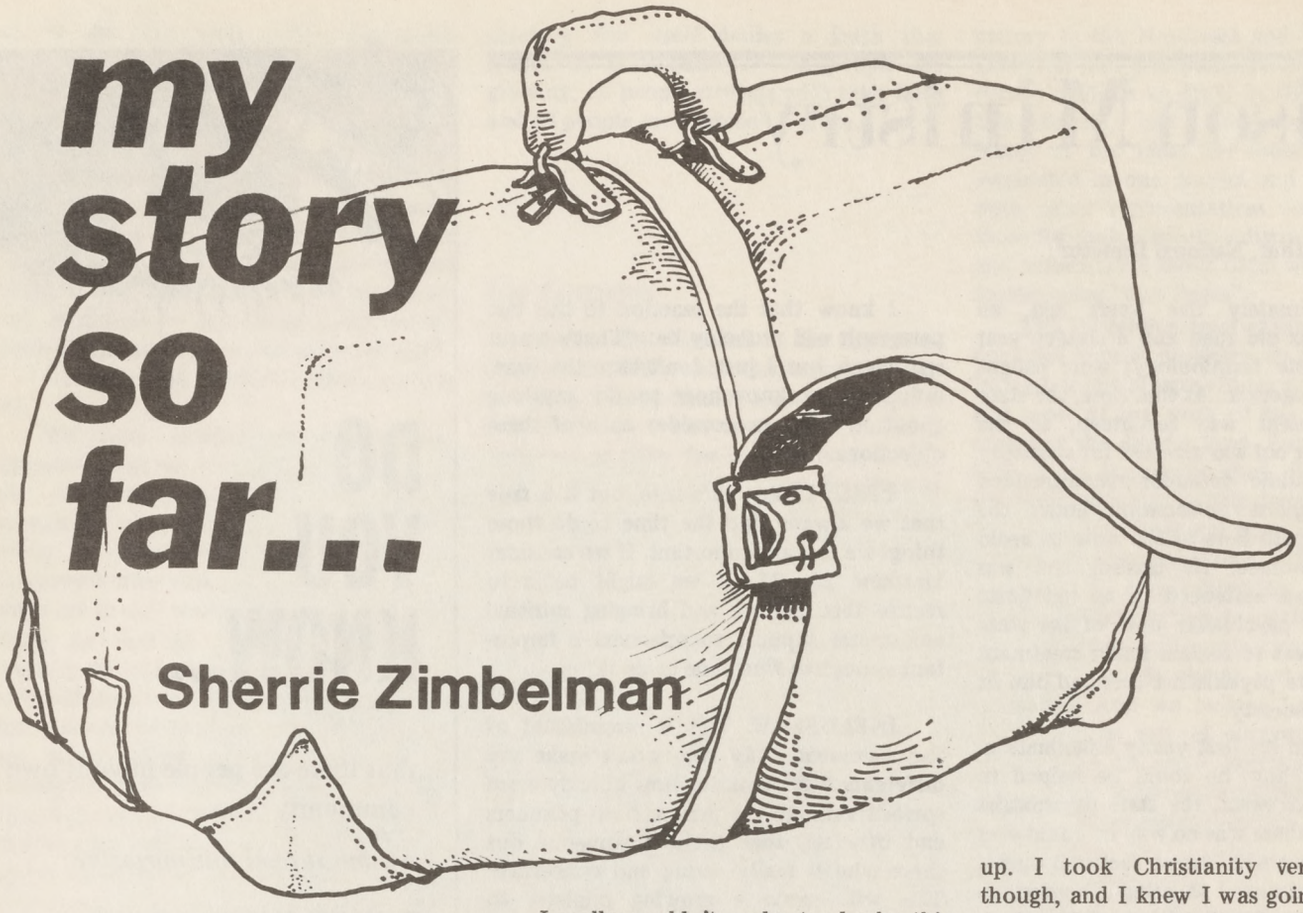
Most metropolitan areas provide braille transcribing services free of charge.

Check your phone book or your local public library to find out how you can share the Good News with your neighbors.

". . .that you love one another. . ."
John 15:12

a message from the UFMCC Commission on Innovative Ministries

my story so far...



Sherrie Zimbelman

I clearly remember the afternoon my older sister returned from her first semester away at college. She came into the house lugging a heavy suitcase. My father was following behind her, anxious to help. They were having a "discussion" about why my sister wouldn't allow him to carry the suitcase for her. Reports of the "Women's Liberation Movement" had just begun to appear in the media, and now my sister was bringing it home!

I was somewhat amused by the incident, but it also caused me to seriously consider what she and the women's movement were saying. At high school age, I already agreed with much of what the movement was saying (women are whole persons, more choices in career/marriage, equal pay) but I didn't think I needed personally to be "liberated". Or did I?

I'd had the good fortune of being part of a loving family with parents that encouraged their three daughters to "be yourselves" and "do whatever makes you happy." Growing into feminism, then, was not the arduous struggle for me that it has been for some.

As I took feminism more seriously, I discovered that many of my Christian friends had problems with it. Instead of gladly embracing the new freedom finally being offered them, my Christian sisters

I really couldn't understand why this apparent conflict between Christianity and feminism existed. I was aware of Paul's letters in the New Testament, but I had somehow been spared a lot of the "women's place" and hierarchical interpretations of Scripture sermons as I was growing were confused, some citing Scripture passages as their reason not to develop to their full potential. Those who did accept their freedom found themselves, as I did, being "attacked" by their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Something didn't seem quite right. Was Christianity really an authoritarian structure with rigid rules and roles to enforce? Somehow that didn't seem to be what I felt Jesus had in mind for his family.

Part of me felt that the problem was theological: simply look to the original Greek or Hebrew, learn more about the historical context that the Bible was written in, and treat each other the way Jesus did, with total respect and equal expectations for service. Of course. Everything would be solved.

But another part of me began to realize that the problem went much deeper than that. Were my brothers (and sometimes my sisters) who labeled me a "women's libber" or passed me off as a heretic really concerned with the message of Jesus or were they hiding behind the Bible?

up. I took Christianity very seriously, though, and I knew I was going to have to deal with some of the theological issues and conflicts if I was going to feel comfortable being both a child of God and a woman.

I enrolled at Pacific College, a liberal arts Mennonite college in Fresno, California. During my freshman year I took a Bible survey course. I was required to write a term paper on the topic of my choice. "Aha," I thought, "here's my chance to finally work out this conflict. . . I'll do my paper on 'Women and the Bible.' "

I read and studied, thought, prayed, and struggled through the issues. Many of the questions I'd had were resolved in this process. My final outcome was a completed term paper, and along with it, a sense of resolved conflict, and feelings of affirmation as a woman. I had discovered that it was entirely possible to have a theologically sound and consistent approach to Scripture and a feminist viewpoint at the same time!

I became "known" on campus for my feminist beliefs. I was somewhat surprised because I wasn't all that vocal. But somehow word got around. The feminist consciousness at my particular Christian college was low enough that I was "news", yet high enough that I had support from many of my professors and many of my friends. Once a professor of mine was discussing the issue of women in class. He stopped his lecture for a moment to look

up and ask "What do you think of that, Sherrie?" I was proud to be known in this way.

I started to notice something, though, about the way people reacted to me because I "took a stand". I felt that people would sometimes use me as an excuse *not* to think about feminism. If I were present, they felt that they didn't really need to face the issue or take a stand themselves. I would be sitting and minding my own business when the subject of women would come up in class. Students would turn around and smile at me, waiting for me to say something. Sometimes I would. But couldn't they say it themselves?

Whether or not they agreed wasn't the issue. The issue to me was the ease with which they dismissed their own responsibility to think through the issues and take a stand one way or another.

I had four very good years in college. I was encouraged to question and think through issues. My personal faith expanded to an awareness of social concerns. I began to apply some of the hermeneutical/theological principles I'd discovered in my struggle with feminism to other issues. I began to see the connection between sexism and racism, materialism, nationalism, world hunger, violence in all its forms, and so on, from a Christian perspective. How was I to approach these issues? What did Christianity have to say to them? What did they have to say to the Church?

I wasn't satisfied with the way the church had usually faced up to (or not faced up to) these kinds of concerns. When I read the Bible now, I began to see just how political many of Jesus' actions were. He identified with the oppressed. He "took the flack" for them in a way that included more than the spiritual and eternal. What did this mean to me as one of his followers?

As I learned more about church history and as I watched some of that history being made I saw that throughout the ages the church had been responsible for perpetuating and enforcing not only myths about women but about other oppressed groups as well. I saw where the church stood while slavery was being challenged. I saw where the church stood on issues like the "divine right of Kings", whether or not the world was flat and whether or not Galileo was right. I saw where the church stood when "witches" and homosexuals were being burned at the stake. And I saw my talents and the talents of the women around me being wasted. We were addressed as "brother". We were patronized (matronized?), ignored, hated, or put on a pedestal. What part did I want of an oppressive structure that held people back instead of liberating them? Why wasn't the church *being* the church? I thought it very ironic that fresh and liberating ideas were always being rejected by the church. Somewhere the church began to see its purpose as upholding the status quo rather than being the liberating, changing, growing element Christ intended it to be. Jesus had broken us out of our roles. Feminism should have been welcomed as being in keeping with that intention. Instead it was labeled as a secular and worldly movement to be avoided, fought against, or laughed at. Why did the church label as worldly its own liberating mission?

Graduation time was coming, and I needed to determine my next move. Would I remain within the church? I realized that the church would never be perfect because it was made up of humans. The ideal concept of Christ's church was worth preserving, though, and I wanted to work towards that ideal. I would continue to work at changing those aspects of the church that I felt were in contradiction to Christ's teachings.

I had heard a lot about the various Mennonite service organizations, and decided to investigate. I discovered that Mennonite Voluntary Service offered an opportunity to work with a Christian feminist group in Chicago. They needed a volunteer worker to help with their newsletter, *Daughters of Sarah*. Perfect! I made the arrangements to live with a group of Mennonite volunteers in Chicago, set things up with *Daughters of Sarah*, and moved to Chicago.

I had lots of fun with *Daughters of Sarah*. The job was nice and the members were stimulating, interesting people. As the office manager, I was inspired by the encouragement and personal contact from many of the readers of *Daughters of Sarah*.

The Daughters discussed lots of weighty issues at meetings. I was glad to observe an increasing interest among the members and in the publication itself in making connections between the oppression of women and the oppression that other groups face. We talked about abortion, divorce, violence to women, homosexuality, racial discrimination, and other issues.

Homosexuality, in particular, became a subject of concern for me. I had felt uncomfortable with never having resolved where I stood on that issue. I had been challenged with this years ago. I was listening to my sister (this time, my other sister) having a debate with a good friend of ours on the biblical issues related to homosexuality. Their discussion reminded me of a college-sponsored trip to Los Angeles I'd taken my freshman year. One of the places we visited as part of an Urban Studies class was the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). This church in Los Angeles, and others like it world-wide, was founded because many gay Christians were kicked out of (or grossly misunderstood in) their own churches. MCC provided a special ministry to gay Christians, though many of its members were "straight" or heterosexual.

I didn't feel completely comfortable there at the time. But I was decidedly uncomfortable with the ease in which most of the other class members dismissed the issue: "Homosexuality is wrong. Period." I had mixed feelings. But I wasn't aware that any of my close friends were gay (little did I know), so I sort of put the issue "on hold".

Several years later, I was challenged again. Daughters of Sarah was discussing homosexuality at meetings. Once again, I felt sympathetic towards a cause that most Christians had problems with. I still felt unsure of my position, but my increased contact with gay persons and my theological perspective drew me closer to a tentative "pro-gay" position.

Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Mollenkott had been asked to write an article for *Daughters of Sarah* on homosexuality (Nov/Dec 1977 issue). A format presenting opposing views was chosen; the Daughters didn't feel comfortable determining a consensus opinion on this complex issue. I was quite interested to see what Letha and Virginia would say. When their article arrived, I was very pleased with their sensitive approach. They provided some very helpful background information about the biblical passages. I felt much better about my own position.

Several months later I read *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* by the same authors. I was challenged to become involved in some way. I would be faced with lots of new concerns: Would my involvement reinforce the myth that "feminists are all a bunch of man-hating lesbians anyway?" For this reason, would my association with *Daughters of Sarah* make the other members uncomfortable and therefore make me feel uncomfortable with them? How would I feel if friends and acquaintances assumed I was gay? Being a feminist had been enough of a struggle. Did I have enough energy left to face a whole new endeavor? Was I willing to take the necessary risks to follow Christ in what I sensed as a call to involvement? I decided to take the risks.

I decided that I would much rather be assumed to be gay than be assumed to be an oppressor *of* gays. (And after getting to know many gay Christians, I am rather proud to be associated with them.) If someone wants to believe that all feminists are a bunch of "man-hating lesbians" I can't stop them. (Most of the feminists I know *aren't* lesbians. Most of the lesbians I know *don't* hate men.) The energy I need to deal with all of this comes from Jesus, and from the support of some very special people.

I began to attend Evangelicals Concerned meetings (a national group of gay and straight Christians working to change the church's attitude towards gays), my local MCC, and I became politically involved.

The people I met at Evangelicals Concerned and at MCC people were responsible, honest, loving, "just like you and me". They had been evicted from their churches but many were quite willing to try for reconciliation. They accepted me warmly though they had every right to reject me as as oppressor — a straight person. I don't know if I would have that much patience!

I spoke with people who had tried years of psychotherapy, counseling, prayer and healing lines; but a change never came. As they accepted themselves, they became aware that perhaps God wasn't interested in healing something that wasn't a disease.

I met some very wonderful people that I probably would not have otherwise met. These groups are predominantly male, but I saw evidence of real attempts at incorporating a feminist consciousness. The Spirit was certainly present. A high level of personal caring and open warmth drew me in. MCC Chicago is presently my church home.

I don't know where my journey from here will take me. I hope to continue in the change and growth that is inherent in following Christ. I encourage you in your life and ministry to seek to follow Jesus in your own way.

And remember — don't be afraid to carry your own suitcase! †

Sherrie Zimbelman is a member of MCC Chicago. This article is reprinted with permission from *Daughters of Sarah*, March 1979.

DON'T FORGET !!!

☆

UFMCC'S NINTH GENERAL CONFERENCE

☆

AUGUST 13 - 19, 1979
BILTMORE HOTEL
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

(cont'd from pg 15) Here in the United States, I find that the Sears Roebuck catalog advertises its wares under three categories: Good, Better, and Best. I think it is a complete mistake to try to establish a clear distinction between the wholly bad and the wholly good. That, in a way, is the very ethical negation from which the Christian faith in God Incarnate ought to have delivered us. But one CAN speak of the good, the better and the best.

Physical, sexual relationships are *good*, and we need to say this unequivocally, because it is tied up with the doctrine of creation. They are *better* when they are set in the context of caring, however attenuated that caring. They are *best* when they are set in that relationship where two lives are moving towards genuine fulfillment in honest, open, loving relationship. These three things go heterosexually, and they go homosexually, too. *(next column)*

Now this leads me back to prostitutes, the one-night-stand, and all that. I refuse to condemn, who am I that I should condemn, people who are compelled to seek the one-night-stand, the half-hour or less, the few hours or more. What I do want to condemn is the kind of society which has made it so difficult for human beings to find a better or a best. Those of you who know, know from experience and these things will perhaps bear me out when I mention some of the reasons people go to the places where they can pick up somebody.

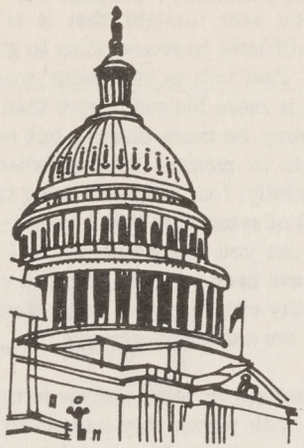
The point to be borne in mind here first of all is loneliness. To overcome loneliness is to find a way of establishing in experience the truth that is given in our humanity, that we are persons in community, and it is not good for any of us to be alone. We need others, and *an*other. And there is the deep human wish to be loved.

My friend, Tony Grey, director of the Albany Trust, once said to me that, after counseling more than 5,000 homosexuals in London in the course of 2 or 3 years, he would make this flat statement: "I have yet to meet a gay boy (sic) or girl (sic) who was not desperately in need of being loved."

Any decent prostitute, male or female, will at least put on the act of caring. Anybody who goes with another person wants at least some sense of being cared for. They need intercourse, also — the relief from the sexual drive — which could otherwise be released only by masturbation, which somehow fails really deeply to satisfy, although it is fine while it lasts.

Then there is something else to which you and I as Christian people ought to be speaking — the terrifying incapacity of so many gay people to dare to commit themselves to another person because they have been brought up so to hate themselves that they have nothing to commit. A couple of friends of mine, in psychoanalytic counseling with homosexuals in England, tell me over and over again that the inhibiting consequences of self-distrust and hate bring about this inability to give one's self to anybody else without feeling that it falls short or is fraudulent.

These are the reasons I find it impossible to stand with those people who, either for heterosexual or for homosexual occasionalism, have such hard words. We'd better understand persons in relationship so they'll be free to give themselves, but above all may be freed to *receive* graciously. *(continued page 26)*



NEW ANTI-GAY LOBBY FORMED

A major new lobby, enlisting evangelical Christians and aiming at legislation against gay people, has opened a Washington office and begun a high-powered lobbying effort.

The new lobby, Christian Voice, promises an intense anti-gay campaign in Congress and hopes to use the religious broadcasting networks to reach millions of voters, Gay Rights National Lobby Executive Director Steve Endean said.

"There is a strong possibility that Christian Voice may not only scare Congress from legislation designed to guarantee civil rights for lesbians and gay men, but that the Christian Voice campaign could also result in the enactment of specifically anti-gay legislation as well," Endean warned. "While the immediate impact would be felt at the national level, Christian Voice's organizing and development of constituent support around the country could well eventually have a profound impact on local gay civil rights efforts as well."

Christian Voice, an outgrowth of American Christian Cause, becomes the first legal lobbying effort against gay civil rights, Endean said. Other groups, such as Anita Bryant's Protect America's Children, are supposed to be restricted from direct lobbying activity in order to maintain tax exempt status. The prospect is, Endean said, that they will now organize behind Christian Voice and swell its numbers and contributions. A Christian Voice Congressional Advisory Committee already has enlisted 11 members of Congress, and more are expected to join.

"This is a very serious threat to the progress of our movement," Endean said. "Christian Voice claims a million dollar campaign fund and expects to have a million supporters in its first year. While many groups exaggerate their resources, those familiar with the evangelical Christian movement believe the figures may well be accurate. The successful enlistment of the evangelical Christian movement into political activism against gay people cannot be dismissed.

"The lesbian and gay communities have responded fantastically to the various referenda and initiatives around the country, and we have had major successes in Seattle and California. However, many of us forget that the basic civil rights that we fight so hard to retain in a few localities simply do not exist throughout the majority of the country. The national lobbying effort, particularly in light of the threat of Christian Voice, poses a national test of our commitment."

Endean said that the Gay Rights National Lobby would continue its efforts in Congress through the 1979 Gay Civil Rights Bill and would maintain "watchdog" oversight of possible anti-gay bills and amendments proposed by Christian Voice. Contributions to assist the Lobby should be sent to: Gay Rights National Lobby (GRNL), 1606 17th Street N.W., Washington, D.C., 20009. †

DID YOU KNOW . . . . .

United Way contributions, deducted from your salary, can be designated to go to UFMCC?

All you have to do is complete a Designation Form and your donations will go directly to UFMCC. For Designation Forms and additional information, contact your local United Way office.

(BOTTOM LINE continued from page 17)

I thought this all out and decided they didn't dare accuse me of anything without proof positive. I mean, you just don't say these horrible things on the record without hard evidence. Evidently, they had none. This didn't mean they couldn't get it easily enough. Why had I ever agreed to have my name printed on our Holy Union invitations? I had fought to convince my lover we could have invitations without my name on them. But no, she insisted. I had given in. That would probably hang me.

The bell. Round six. It seemed that the day would continue this way. People would greet me and sincerely ask how I was doing. They seemed disappointed when I'd tell them I was fine. Then I began to get angry with their attitude which screamed at me, "What an awful thing they're saying about you, you poor dear."

My blood pressure was up by the time I met with my study hall. They were looking at me and snickering. Trying not to be paranoid, I ignored them. I even ignored them when I heard one boy say, "She even looks like a man." When that hour was over I breathed a sigh of relief. At the same moment I sighed, someone yelled "Lezzie" from the hallway. I was sick.

And the next bell rang. Round seven. I was tired but I had to finish the fight. I don't know what possessed me to walk back to the chairs where the name calling came from. There, written in ugly ink on dirty desk tops was, "Ms. Scot is a lesie." I was furious — they had spelled my name and lezzie wrong. Like Lady MacBeth, I began washing desks. I had to remove those words. That was the only way I knew how to get my anger out. And as I scrubbed those dirty desks, I cried.

The bell rang — Round eight. It was over. At least for today. †

(PITTENGER continued from page 24)

Have you ever thought that it is so much more difficult to receive than to give, although St. Paul tells us that Jesus' words were that it is more blessed to give than to receive? It may be more blessed, but how difficult it is to receive! Because when I receive gracefully, I am acknowledging that I am in need of something that I have to be given. And can you relate yourself in love when you have been made to feel that you are not worthy either to give or to receive because you are a dreadful person?

What matters in relationships is their quality, not with whom they happen to be had. Are those relationships enriching and fulfilling for both partners? And is the relationship itself an enriching and fulfilling relationship?

Now let's take a look at homosexual union, because more and more gay people are seeking this. I believe that homosexual union is not marriage, because it does not, cannot, include the procreative possibility, and ought not to include the legal sanctions our western culture has attached to human relationships of that sort.

I believe that union can be deeply enriching and fulfilling, but I believe that it can be entered upon only if it is done realistically. The estate of marriage is one thing, homosexual union is another thing, and they include different considerations. It is about time that this sort of subject is seriously considered, rather than escaped by a too-close bringing-over of the whole heterosexual pattern, good as it is, into the homosexual pattern, which good as it can be, is still different.

I'm going to end on what you might call the pious note. In the Holy Week liturgy of the Roman Church, before they got to tinkering with the ancient wording, there was a wonderful phrase in Holy Thursday's service: *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*. A hymn in a parish missal I once picked up in Richmond, VA, puts it: "Where love and charity abound, there God is to be found." Where one sees outgoing love and sharing (*caritas et amor*), there God is at work.

And that is as true for the homosexual as the heterosexual mode of relations, and also for the celibate, non-genital mode of sexual expression. And may I suggest to you, as one of the things for your agenda, a concerted effort to proclaim that fact as the basis for everything else; that wherever, however, and whenever outgoing love and deep concern are present, there God is — and usually, if God's mysterious way of working is properly understood, in places where conventional society does not look. Who would ever have looked at the cave in Bethlehem, or at a criminal's cross outside a city wall, or at a tomb that was empty, and think to find God working there? Oh, no, for most of us maybe, God works in the nice and decent places, in the suburbs. But it seems God *prefers* the slums.

Where love and outgoing concern are present, there the cosmic Lover is to be found. And when one realizes that, one can only say from the depths of one's heart, "Thanks be to God." †

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Jesus and sexuality

Jeffrey Pulling

When we look at the life and teachings of Jesus to illuminate the matter of sexuality, we must keep in mind the Christian affirmation that Jesus is the definitive revealer of God, the self-disclosure of God to our world. Jesus is also the "new Adam", the pioneer of the new humanity. Therefore what Jesus said and did about sexuality is of prime importance. All other Christian witnesses and all of the Scriptures must be examined and evaluated in the light of Jesus.

Jesus has traditionally been pictured by the Church as being asexual, as not having any sexual feelings at all. It is hard for many people to even imagine Jesus the Christ as a sexual being. Any explicit sexual behavior on his part is automatically ruled out. One reason for this is that Christian theology has never found a satisfactory way of presenting the humanity of Jesus. One of the orthodox doctrines of Christianity is that Jesus was and is fully God and fully a human being, truly divine and truly human. Another way of stating this is that God revealed God's self to us and came to us in a particular historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was a real live human being, with needs, feelings, opinions, and so on. The Protestant Reformer Martin Luther was fond of saying that he was sure that Mary had to change the diapers of the baby Jesus. The popular image that we have received of Jesus has been one of someone untouched by sexual desire in any way. Yet there is nothing in the Scriptures that indicates that Jesus was void of sexuality. Luke 2:21 records that Jesus was circumcised when he was eight days old, therefore he really did have a penis. The Letter to the Hebrews witnesses to the humanness of Jesus:

For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:16-18)

For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)

Many Christians have a hard time understanding or dealing with any emotions at all on the part of Jesus. Yet in the Gospel accounts, Jesus is often shown to be a very *passionate* person, exploding with anger, crying out in frustration, and weeping sadly. It is unfortunate that the "Passion" of Jesus has come to be identified only with the last week of his life leading up to his crucifixion. Jesus was a very passionate person, and not the meek and mild lamb that he has often been pictured to be.

Many of the sexual attitudes that we Christians have read into Jesus, and the asexual stance that we have just assumed him to have had, are due to the whole confusion of Christianity with other religions. Most major religions *do* say that the truly spiritual person renounces sex, or at least keeps a strong check on it. In the Orient, this is especially true. The founders of Confucianism, Jain, and Buddhism all renounced sexual, sensual pleasure. Greek-Hellenistic thought, with its flesh-soul dualism, strongly influenced the original Jewish Christianity and made it something different. Judaism, out of which Jesus and the first Christians came, never regarded renunciation of sex life as a virtue. In fact, this is one of the most marked differences between Judaism and other classic religions. The early Church fathers did advocate an anti-sexual stance, but that was foreign to Judaism, and I think foreign to Jesus, too. This has carried on to the present day in Christianity, especially in the Roman Catholic Church with the Pope's pronouncements on birth control and priestly celibacy. Most Protestant churches also teach rigid moralism when it comes to sexuality. I do not think, however, that we can blame the Church's present unhealthy attitudes about sexuality on our founder and head, Jesus. The Church's unhealthy attitudes about sex stem from later distortions of what Jesus was all about, not from Jesus himself.

There is a problem, of course, in finding out exactly what the sexual attitudes and actions of Jesus were. The four Gospel accounts that we have in the New Testament are not biographies of the life of Jesus. There is very little historically reliable information about Jesus' life before his emergence as a preacher of the Kingdom of God. This means that we know very little about his life except for his last years, because those who remembered and recorded his words and deeds were concerned only about the time of his public ministry, death, and resurrection. It is therefore very hard to piece together most of his life. Much work, however, has been done on this — some of it very scholarly, some of it just speculation. There are two men who have worked especially on the sexuality of Jesus: William Phipps (author of the books *Was Jesus Married?* and *The Sexuality of Jesus*, Harper and Row) and Tom Driver (who wrote the article *Sexuality and Jesus*). Both of these scholars have studied the

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scarce information and the few sayings there are in the Gospels, and they have also studied the Jewish culture of the time in which Jesus grew up.

Phipps' controversial and much-debated thesis is that Jesus was probably married. His argument runs that a Jewish father had five principal responsibilities to his son: to circumcise him, to redeem him (that is, to give a sacrificial offering to God for him), to teach him the Torah, to teach him a trade, and to find him a wife. The first four of these seem to have been fulfilled by Joseph, according to the Gospel accounts. Luke 2:21-24 records that Jesus was circumcised, dedicated to the Lord, and redeemed at the Temple at the proper age.

Circumcision, the first duty, had a sexual as well as cultic purpose. It originated as a puberty rite and was associated with making a young man fit for marriage. The Jewish writer Philo explains that it was performed for the physical purpose of facilitating sexual intercourse. Early in Hebrew history, however, infant circumcision was substituted for the more severe operation which had been performed when a boy came of age.

For the Hebrews, the religious significance of circumcision became paramount. This was the mark of belonging to God's covenant community. Rabbi Akiba held that circumcision symbolized the consecration to God of the whole physical body. But why was the penis singled out for special honor? The Jewish theologian Martin Buber has written, "Sex is hallowed by the sacrament of the circumcision covenant which survives in its original purity and not only confirms the act of begetting but converts it into a holy vocation."

The sociologist David Mace explains further:

"Every Hebrew man carried on his body the mark of his identity as a member of God's chosen race. And it was no accident that he carried this mark on his sexual organ. Far from being disreputable, this was the most sacred part of his whole body; therefore it was appropriate that it should be specially dedicated to God as the symbol that his whole body, his whole person, was dedicated to God. For it was with this organ that he became, in a special sense, a co-worker with God."

Circumcision was important then both as a mark of Jewish identity and as a symbol of humans being co-creators with God. Circumcision was entirely a *male* rite,

> *Jesus never talked about a soul or spirit or mind as distinct from the body. The human being is a totality. . . .*

of course, but it does indicate a fairly healthy attitude toward sex on the part of the Jews.

So Jesus was circumcised and shortly thereafter dedicated to God at the Temple. At the latter ceremony, in accordance with Mosaic law, an animal sacrifice was presented to "redeem" the first-born son in remembrance of God's liberation of the Israelites from Egypt. Jesus' parents were obviously devout Jews because they observed these stipulations. In fact, Jesus' parents went beyond the traditional requirements. Jewish men who lived outside of Jerusalem in other parts of Palestine were supposed to come to Jerusalem occasionally to visit the Temple. The Gospel of Luke (2:41), however, records that both parents, not just Joseph but Mary as well, devoted a number of days every year to traveling the considerable distance from Nazareth to Jerusalem to attend the Passover feast.

Jesus was taught the fundamentals and duties of his faith by his parents. Jesus knew well the Scriptures of his people, that is the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. He also knew well the teachings of the rabbis. Jesus obviously had both formal and informal training, and that beyond the elementary level. In fact, Jesus became known as an expert in the Jewish religion and was himself addressed as "Rabbi" or "Teacher".

Along with Torah study was training in a craft. It was incumbent upon all fathers to provide vocational instruction for their male offspring, for, as a Jewish saying puts it, "He who does not teach his son a trade teaches him to steal." Another saying points to the moral necessity of balancing religious pursuits with physically demanding work: "It is excellent to combine study of the Torah with a secular occupation, for toil in them both puts sin out of mind." Thus the great rabbinic teacher Hillel combined inquiry into his religious heritage with the work of a common laborer. The apostle Paul became knowledgeable in both Judaism and tent-making. In similar manner, it is likely that Jesus became skilled at interpreting the Scriptures during the period of his life when he was apprenticed to his carpenter father (Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55). Even those whose primary calling was interpreting the Jewish religious tradition were expected to gain their livelihood in ways other than charging for their instruction.

It is therefore clear from the Gospels that Joseph carried out these first four responsibilities of a Jewish father for his son, and there is no reason not to believe that he also carried out the last duty, that of arranging a marriage for his son. This was something every Jewish father did. In the patriarchal society in which Jesus lived, a young man was generally given little voice in deciding who his wife would be. Around the time when a son was physically mature, his father made a betrothal agreement with the guardian of an eligible girl. To delay this more than ten years after puberty was forbidden. The rabbis Hillel and Shammai differed on many points of Scriptural interpretation, but they agreed in affirming that no righteous man can abstain from God's first command, "Be fruitful and multiply." The procreation of children was only one reason why the Jews considered marriage to be a necessity. The responsibilities of marital life were considered a testing ground for developing sturdy character. Judaism consistently depreciated celibacy and the single life. Marriage was obligatory because sexual pleasure was a gift of God, and it must not be soiled by illicit indulgence -- sexual relations out of wedlock.

So, the argument of Phipps goes, it is probable that Jesus married as a young man, even though there is no mention of it in the New Testament. There is no reason for his father to have neglected this fifth duty to his son. Marriage was such a thorough-going social institution that any deviation from this norm would certainly have been mentioned. If Jesus had not been married, it would certainly have been very unusual and it would have been talked about. Jesus was charged by his enemies with being mad, possessed, a Samaritan, and a blasphemer; if he had been a bachelor and/or eunuch, his enemies would have used it against him. It makes sense to assume that Jesus, and for that matter all the apostles, were married.

Another argument for Jesus being married is that it was held in Jewish tradition that a man could become adept at Torah interpretation only *after* he was

skilled at a craft *and* successfully married. There was a saying that a man was fit at the age of 30 for authority, and not before. There is an injunction in the Mishna that states categorically: "An unmarried man may not be a teacher." Jesus must have been married because an unmarried teacher was unimaginable in the culture and time in which he lived: If he was unmarried, his opponents would have certainly criticized him for shirking this sacred duty. We know nothing about the wife of Jesus, but neither do we know anything about the wives of other rabbis and religious leaders of that time. They are just assumed.

In two of the Gospels that were not accepted into the New Testament canon, Jesus is portrayed as a sexual being. In the Gospel of Philip, Mary Magdalene is referred to as Jesus' spouse. The secret Gospel of Mark subtly presents Jesus as homosexual. Apparently this secret Gospel was popular among a group of Gay Gnostics; it points out the "hidden" meanings in the Gospel of Mark. Mark 14:51-52 records that the night Jesus was arrested in the garden, there was a young man who followed after them with nothing on but a linen cloth, and when the guards tried to seize him, he ran away naked. The secret Gospel of Mark explains that Jesus and the disciples had taken this young man to the garden that evening to initiate him into their group, and the initiation included Jesus lying on the initiate all night. So much for the non-Scriptural accounts.

His silence . . . about sex . . . means that . . . Jesus refused to confer upon sex any particular religious status. . . .

The Gospel accounts that we do have in the New Testament are fairly silent about any sexual feelings, temptations, and experiences that Jesus may have had. Tom Driver points out that accounts written about other famous men of that time are also silent about their sex lives, and so this is not significant in itself. Driver goes on to say that it *is* important that Jesus did not emphasize sex in his moral teaching. By so doing, Jesus neutralized the religious meaning of sex. His silence is full of meaning about sex. It means that sex was not a mystical force for coming into contact with the Divine, and neither was it a demonic, evil force coming from Satan. Jesus refused to confer upon sex any particular religious status and meaning. In this respect he is different from the founders of other religious movements who have tended to the extremes of either championing sexual rejuvenation or negating sensuality totally.

Jesus is recorded to have said a few things, however, in relation to sexuality, and I want to look at these. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28). This may sound overly harsh, but it falls into a section where Jesus is examining motivations and intentions as well as actual deeds. He was emphasizing the inner meaning of the "coveting" commandments, and not just their outward manifestations. Psychologists tell us that we cannot consciously help what we feel; we often do get angry, feel lustful, and desire things that are not good for us or for others. I think that Jesus recognized this as much as we do, but he also wanted to point out how distorted and selfish we are inside. One thing we constantly have to work on is controlling our negative emotions because anger and hate CAN lead to violence, and lust CAN lead to rape and to destruction of relationships. Our inner motivations and feelings are important, and we must take responsibility for them as well as for our exterior actions. I like the Biblical definition of "lust" which the Rev. Bob Arthur has given: "the desire of anything more than the desire of God", and specifically in relation to sexuality, "self-gratification at the expense of another".

Following this in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is recorded to have said, "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce'. But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress . . ." (Matthew 5:31-32). In the other Synoptic Gospels Jesus is recorded as laying down even stricter guidelines with no possible grounds for divorce at all (Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). The Greek word translated here as "unchastity" or "fornication" has traditionally been defined as having sexual relations outside of marriage bonds on the part of a single person; however, that would be impossible, by definition, for married partners, so how could that then be a ground for divorce? Rev. Arthur suggests that "fornication" more accurately means the sexual use of another for one's own gratification, without regard to the needs of the other person.

To idolize sex by constantly seeking it, or by never engaging in it, is wrong, harmful, and unhealthy.

In these teachings on divorce, Jesus is addressing himself to a debate going on at that time among the rabbis about divorce, and Jesus is actually taking a pro-woman stance here. Jewish law allows a man to divorce his wife for any trivial reason and leave her literally out in the cold. Without a husband or father to take care of her financial needs, a woman in ancient Palestine was really in bad straits. Jesus believed in the ideal of a lifelong commitment of two partners (Matthew 19:4-6). God's intention was for married persons to stay together, to work out their problems, to share life together, but, as Jesus went on to say in verses 7-9, divorce was allowed in the Law because of human sinfulness, mistakes, and hardness of heart.

Then Jesus went on to talk about eunuchs (Matthew 19:10-12), apparently indicating that it was all right not to marry, to be single and childless. This is where he went beyond Jewish thought of his day, which maintained that it was very important to marry and bear children so that one's name could be perpetuated. The single life, however, was not idealized by Jesus either.

What Jesus did stress was that no ties of any kind must hold a person back from answering the summons of Jesus and responding to the demands of the Kingdom. This explains the consistent refusal of Jesus to remain involved with his own immediate relatives, and the reward he promised to those who have severed family ties (Luke 18:29-30: Mark 10:28-31; Matthew 19: 28-30). In order to be a disciple of Jesus, one must be willing to leave behind that which is holding one back. Apparently some of the early Christian apostles and missionaries did leave their wives and families behind on account of Jesus. There were women in the company of Jesus who traveled around with Jesus' roving band

(Luke 8:1-3), but whether any of these women were the wives of the male disciples, we do not know. It is clear that some of the first followers were uprooted from family life, although Paul said that after the death of Jesus many went around accompanied by their wives (1 Corinthians 9:5). In the early Church the remarriage of young widows was strongly encouraged (1 Timothy 5:14), and only men who had proved themselves to be good husbands and fathers could be appointed overseers of Christian congregations.

So Jesus idealized neither the married life nor the single or celibate state. In fact, he said that in the resurrection people will not marry (Luke 20:34-35; Matthew 22:29-30; Mark 12: 24-27). There will be no exclusive relationships in the resurrection or in the Kingdom. I interpret this to mean that all will experience the harmony that lovers experience now in their best moments.

Another area of Jesus' sexuality was in his relationships with women. It was extraordinary in terms of his culture. In fact, Jesus could be called a feminist. He rejected the double standard in sexual morality. He refused to condemn the woman caught in adultery and instead dealt sternly with her self-righteous accusers (John 8:1-11). Who among them had not sinned? Where was the male partner in the act of adultery? Jesus did not condone irresponsible sexual behavior either, however. This woman caught in adultery, the Samaritan woman at the well (who had had five husbands, and was then living with yet another man, and was obviously unable to establish a stable relationship), and Mary Magdalene, a prostitute, were all healed by their contact with Jesus, and they changed their lives.

Jesus treated women with respect and talked with them, which was unthinkable for a Jewish rabbi or for a Pharisee. To the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) and to Mary and Martha at the death of their brother Lazarus (John 11), Jesus revealed some new theological insights about God and about himself. Apparently these women were open to understanding some things which Jesus' male followers could not grasp.

In his teaching, Jesus avoided the male proclivity toward stereotyping women, and he did not caution other men about the wiles of women. In his parables and stories, he used female as well as male characters. In many ways, Jesus subverted the anti-feminism of his day.

What was Jesus' stand on homosexuality? In his recorded teachings, the subject does not come up at all. Jesus was open to all kinds of people: prostitutes, tax collectors, lepers, thieves, all who were considered the scum and outcasts of society. Jesus did not go around condemning sexual behavior the way that many pious Christians do today. He pointed out the harmfulness of lust and of violating marriage covenant vows, but he was much more critical of persons who were proud, hypocritical, and blind to need than he was of those who committed what were regarded as sexual sins. Jesus was not afraid of relating in close, loving ways with men *and* women. He expressed strong emotions for both men and women: John the Beloved Disciple, Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Mary Magdalene, etc. We do not know whether this affection was expressed in a physical way, but we can see that Jesus was a very open, loving, and giving person.

In fact, that which is good, positive, and constructive about sexuality in Christianity can be traced back to the teaching and example of Jesus. I would like to point out three of these positive teachings about sexuality.

(1) Jesus maintained that the first and great commandment is to love the Lord God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matthew 22:35-38; Luke 10: 25-28; Mark 12:28-30), and he affirmed the Deuteronomic command to worship and serve God alone (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8). What does this have to do with sex? We should not worship any gods or idols, only the one, true God. This means not giving one's life to, or centering one's life around, sex, money, pleasure, self, success, etc. Sex is not the divine, nor is it the ultimate experience. To idolize sex by constantly seeking it, OR by never engaging in it, is wrong, harmful, and unhealthy. If we view sex in this light, it is much less likely to have a destructive or disruptive influence in our lives. We should not look to it to solve our problems, and we should not expect too much from it. This would probably result in our being less frustrated and disillusioned with our own sexual encounters. Sex has its place, and that is not at the center of our lives.

(2) Jesus said that this love of God, which should determine all aspects of our lives, must be done by our *whole* selves, with all our soul, heart, mind, and strength. Jesus affirmed the Hebrew insight that the human being is a totality. To separate a person into flesh and soul, or into body and mind, always ends up demeaning the body (and consequently sex). Jesus was concerned about, and ministered to, both the spiritual and physical needs of people. Jesus never talked about a soul or spirit or mind as distinct from the body. The human being is a totality, a unity of its parts. This becomes especially clear when Jesus healed people by addressing himself to all their needs and helping them to integrate themselves into some sort of wholeness. This integration of soul, heart, mind, and strength also suggests a way to make sexual decisions. Sex becomes distorted if it is viewed exclusively in terms of physicality, or rationality, or emotions. Psychologists tell us not to ignore or repress our sexual feelings, but it is dangerous to act on our feelings alone. We also have minds to think out the consequences of what we do, and we have our bodies and our health to be concerned about. Our sexual decisions should be made by our integrated self.

(3) Jesus said that the second commandment is to love one's neighbor as oneself (Matthew 22:39-40; Luke 10: 25-28; Mark 12:31). This is the crux of human relating for both Jesus and Paul: love of one's neighbor (Galatians 5:13-15; Romans 13:8-10). Love of neighbor is the basis for determining all of one's actions. This is clearly applicable to sexual behavior. To love someone is not only to care about that person, but also to be concerned about what happens to him or her. When we use people solely to satisfy our desires, we demean them. When we treat people as objects, looking at them only as sex objects, we are not loving them. This does not mean that we have to be in a stable love relationship with everyone with whom we engage in sex, but it does mean that our sexual relating should be open, honest, considerate, and giving. When we exploit, dominate, or use force on others, we are in effect saying that they are less than we are, and that they can be used for our self-indulgence. This applies not only in sexual relating, but in all human relations socially, politically, and economically. Mutuality is what we should strive for in our relationships. Interestingly enough, I think that those of us who are gay know more about mutual love between equals in a relationship than most heterosexuals do, because we do not have to act our male dominance over the female, which is so entrenched in just about every culture worldwide. Two men or two women relating together can show what it means to work out a mutual relationship.

These three guidelines then we can glean from the teaching of Jesus: (1) worshipping God and not sex; (2) making our sexual decisions with our whole integrated self; and (3) expressing love and care in our sexual relations, and not self-indulgence and dominance. †